

FACTORS AFFECTING GOAL COMPLETION
OF ADULT BASIC EDUCATION STUDENTS
IN THE NORTHEAST KINGDOM OF VERMONT

Jeanne Dickinson

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ABSTRACT

Attrition in Adult Basic Education programs is a problem that has concerned tutors and administrators since the advent of the program. It is estimated that approximately 60% of those who enroll in ABE either to acquire basic literacy skills, prepare for a GED, study for their driver's permit or Commercial Driver's License, learn introductory computer skills, brush-up on basic reading, writing, and math skills, or prepare for U.S. citizenship leave the program before reaching their goal(s).

Various studies have been done, particularly in the last decade, attempting to determine what factors influence dropout and persistence. Most research has been quantitative, focusing on reasons for dropout, using data from end-of-the-year reports and Department of Education statistics. The validity of this information is dependent upon the accuracy of the person filling out the exit sheet. Interpretations of federal questionnaires can vary from state to state. Often the reasons a person leaves the program are not known and follow-up can be difficult.

This study questioned successful goal completers directly about factors that influenced their persistence. Ten former students were interviewed and their responses taped, transcribed, and analyzed, in an attempt to isolate the characteristics or factors that encouraged continuation until completion of their goals. A demographics sheet covered: sex, age, marital status, length of time spent working on the goal, length of time from enrollment to completion of the goal, employment, family, class location, number of tutors worked with, last grade completed in school, last grade parents completed, prior school experience, diagnosis of learning disabilities, perception of learning, medical problems as a child, medication used (as a child or when an ABE student), and self-determination in approaching tasks. The main interview questions started out by asking what helped them reach their goals and, if they had thought of quitting, what kept them going. Other issues addressed were the impact of making progress, interest in subjects, program aspects (time of classes, etc.), self-esteem, and support.

Six of the ten participants said that their own determination had the greatest impact upon their perseverance. One of those six also mentioned the tutor and another the desire to learn and the goal of a B.A. One former ABE student listed the tutor as primarily responsible for her continuation but credited her children also and her desire to improve in math. Another said it was her wish to become a U.S. citizen and realizing that she was capable of doing it. The realization of ability was repeated by another, along with improved self-esteem and wanting to pass college classes. Someone else said that the goal of college and a promised party kept him going.

Other things that the participants mentioned as being factors in their continuation until completion of their goals were: making progress, improved self-esteem (low upon entry into the program but greatly improved upon success and goal attainment), presence of support (family and tutor), flexible meeting times, and convenient location of classes (home or nearby learning center).

Common characteristics or factors of this sample of ABE students that may or may not have any bearing on perseverance were: a stated goal, the goal of GED, working with one tutor, being met in their homes, not leaving the program before reaching their goal, spending less than a year working on the goal, time elapsed from declaration of goal to completion being less than a year, lack of a learning disability diagnosis, not feeling that they learned differently, single marital status, no medical problems as a child, no medication as a child, and no medication while an ABE student. Lack of inspiration by subject material was also a common characteristic but most likely wouldn't have affected perseverance.

Recommendations for program improvement and implications for further research are included at the end of the study.

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to all the students who have participated in the Adult Basic Education program and are either struggling to accomplish their goals or have already completed them. It is also dedicated to the tutors, who through their own dedication, innovation, and perseverance have aided their students in their efforts.

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INTRODUCTION

Why some students stay in Adult Basic Education programs until they reach their goals while others drop out is a question that has plagued their teachers since the advent of the program. Indeed, more drop out than persist. Although a considerable amount of research has been conducted on drop-outs, only within the past decade have people seriously begun to look at factors affecting goal attainment. Also, it is being realized that variables promoting persistence are not necessarily diametrically opposed to factors influencing dropout. Those who complete their goals may possess unique qualities or have access to required services and support.

To pursue this question of what unique factors contribute to goal attainment, a few approaches could be undertaken. First, a review of available literature on goal attainment is necessary. Next, a study to obtain further information could be conducted in a couple of ways. A survey covering all possible variables influencing goal attainment could be orally administered to goal completers and their responses recorded. To have validity, this would need to be administered to a fairly large sample with issues of interviewer bias addressed. A qualitative approach, using a smaller sample and eliciting from goal completers through interviewing the factors that influenced them is another method. This open-ended approach would reveal in their own words what most impacted and motivated them to continue. Identifying variables by examining transcripts of the interviews may yield common factors that teachers can employ or help develop in their students to aid in attainment of their goals.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Problem

Investigation into factors affecting persistence in Adult Basic Education programs is warranted by the phenomenal dropout rate in adult literacy programs. According to Harman and Balmuth (1987), as cited in (DuBois, 1989), 50-- 70% of adults entering literacy programs drop out before they reach their goals. Furthermore, only about 5% or less of the estimated 72,000,000 people in need of adult basic education in this country are being reached. It is estimated that 34% of the United States population don't have basic skills constituting an adult education. These figures vary somewhat with a report put out by the Office of Vocational and Adult Education (1993) in Washington, D.C. for the program year 1990-1991 that states that 74% of the people entering an adult education program are retained. Numbers for completers (25%) and persisters (49%) were added together. They list 26% of those entering as leaving before they complete their goals.

Meyers (1988) agreed with DuBois's statistics. In her study she cited McCune and Alamprese (1985) stating that the United States Department of Education figures show that "there are approximately 27 million functionally illiterate adults in the United States, as well as 45 million adults who have only marginal basic skills competence" (p.2). She said that these numbers include a yearly addition of approximately 2.3 million adults: 1.0 million dropouts and "pushouts" from high school, 1.2 million immigrants, and 100,000 refugees. She also cited Harman (1985) who wrote that about 1 million high school students who are functionally illiterate are „graduated' annually. Moore and Jackson (1984) estimated that between 35% and 45% of the adults over age 25 in the United States have not finished high school.

Records for this researcher's Adult Basic Education students from 1984-1988 show that 39.6% left before they completed their objectives. Taking 1985 as a representative year, overall statistics for the state of Vermont indicate that 40% left before completing their goals. Garrison (1985) says that ABE students are four times more likely to drop out than other adult education students. Claus and Quimper (1988) wrote a report that said one of the objectives for the Saginaw Adult Basic Education program in Michigan for 1987-88 was "to attain a dropout rate of 40% or less for those students who receive 12 hours or more of instruction. This standard had not been met during the previous years" (Table I and commentary).

Clearly, Adult Basic Education programs could be reaching a much larger percentage of the population than they currently are. Also, once they do enter the program, dropout rates need to be reduced. The price to society, both economically and socially, is too high not to try to determine what factors impact persistence in the program until goals are attained.

Need for Research

"Scholars in the field of adult education seem to have reached a consensus on the severity of the dropout problem in basic education programs and the corresponding need for research" (Watson, 1983, p.25). She cites DePietro (1975) as having said that "investigation is sorely needed to ascertain causes and/or contributing factors for the low attendance and the high dropout incidences observed in ABE programs' (pp.25-26). Jones, Schulman, and Stubblefield (1978) and Boshier (1973) (cited in Watson, 1983) called for more research on persistence in ABE programs. Boshier said that "the absence of testable theory has crippled adult education participation and dropout research for decades" (p.26). Previous demographic studies done in various states on situational variables have yielded inconclusive and contradictory results and investigators have stressed the need for more original research (Watson, 1983).

(Meyers (1988) also commented on the lack of useful literature and research: “without more informative literature and research, attrition cannot be studied thoroughly, and dropout rates cannot be reduced” (p. 21). She cited Garrison (1985) as having said that both school and non-school variables need to be looked at and that “ABE research cannot compare these variables in post hoc surveys” (p.22). He admits that the dropout problem is complex to research and “somewhat overwhelming.” Meyers (1988) acknowledges the difficulty in studying persistence in ABE because it is often discussed with related topics such as participation and retention. Both Meyers and DuBois (1989) agree with the others that more research is needed, particularly qualitative research.

Previous Studies

Many theories have been offered as to why some adult learners drop out before completing their goals while others persist. These include intelligence, age, race, sex, marital status, parents’ educational level, prior educational level, entry level, scholastic ability, prior diagnosis of learning disabilities, time to complete one’s goals, prior positive / negative school experiences, goal setting, motivation, determination, self-esteem, course relevancy, academic and social integration, unrealistic expectations, locus of control, support, availability of counseling, making progress, finances, economic status, family situation, alcohol / drugs, marriage, employment, health (current / prior medical conditions and current / prior use of medication), relocation, child care problems, transportation, lack of time, quality of instruction, number of tutors, class size, class scheduling, class location (rural / urban, learning center / home), and materials. Some of these issues will be covered in this literature review with particular attention paid to factors that appear to have significance. They will be grouped in broad categories: demographic characteristics (age, prior educational level, etc.), psychological factors (self-esteem, locus of control, support, etc.), situational factors (transportation, child care, etc.), and program variables (class time, location, instruction, etc.). Factors

sometimes can be classified in more than one category (ex: progress can be a psychological as well as a program variable). Some studies that cross these lines may be mentioned in their entirety.

A lot of the research talked about barriers to education. It may be that people that actually complete their goals don't have those barriers or possess certain internal psychological characteristics that allow them to override the effect of those barriers. In a CASAS accountability report for 321 Adult Basic Education programs in the state of California during July 1, 1990 and June 30, 1991, 55% of the participants were retained in the program, 9% achieved one of four goals, 14% reported facing a barrier to education, and 31% left the program for various reasons, most of which were unknown. Of those who reported leaving due to barriers, 70% were contacted and gave the following reasons: 38% moved, 24% changed work time, 14% had family / health problems, 6% had child care issues, 4% had transportation problems, and 13% listed "other." It mentioned the difficulty in contacting students after they have left the program.

In a similar study sponsored by the California State Dept. of Education (1992) for the fiscal year 1991-92, 63% of students enrolled in ABE programs were retained in the program or changed programs, 9% attained a goal, and 28% reported a barrier to education. Men and women were equally likely to be retained. Barriers mentioned were: 13% moved, 10% changed their work time, 6% had health and family reasons, 14% said "other," 4% listed child care, and 2% said transportation. Of particular note, almost half (45%) attended classes for job-related reasons compared to only 12% in 1989-90, perhaps due to mandated pre/posttesting in the GAIN welfare reform program.

DuBois, in her 1989 study, mentioned fear (largely due to prior school experiences), time, and lack of support as major barriers to learning. Her qualitative study of the attitudes and perceptions of 29 adult literacy students in Columbus, Ohio followed an earlier study she had done with Van Tilburg in 1988 that also interviewed 29 students in London, England. She determined that encouragers to learning for those interviewed

were: support (both from family and teachers), success, having a goal, determination, and increased self-esteem. Age related to goals in that those up to their early 20's mostly entered with the hopes of being able to get a better job down the road. Those in their 20's and 30's hoped to eventually get a better job but also wanted to be able to have their children be proud of them. The majority of older students enrolled for self-improvement. Most of the factors influencing persistence for these students seemed to be psychological.

Meyers (1988) analyzed the interviews of 29 people under the age of 25 in North Carolina. She used 18 open-ended interviews of ABE learners that she helped research with Fingeret in 1985 for the North Carolina Adult Basic Education Instructional Program Evaluation and 11 additional interviews that she conducted on her own for this study. Important factors for perseverance in the participants she studied were: improved self-esteem, internal locus of control, having a definite goal, regular attendance, and support.

Watson (1983) looked at data from 29,862 students enrolled in Adult Basic Education programs in Virginia from 1979-1980. 30% dropped out before completing twelve hours of classroom instruction. Age was found to be the most important factor in persistence-- the higher the age, the more positive the correlation with persistence beyond twelve hours of study. Blacks were more likely to stay in the program than whites. People with higher beginning reading levels were less likely to continue than those with low beginning reading levels. The results may have been influenced by the inclusion of students who received their GED with less than 12 hours of instruction as non-persisters.

Jha (1991) studied data from the records of 2,323 students enrolled in ABE through a mid-western, urban, community college over a two-year period and year-end reports. Over two-thirds discontinued attendance with the greatest number leaving before completing 12 hours of instruction. 22% completed a goal, 9% continued in the

program, and 67% discontinued. Age was found to have no bearing on continuation. More females tended to stop and then re-enroll than males. The last grade attended in school had little impact on continuation in ABE. In fact, more discontinuing students had attended the 11th or 12th grade. Higher TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education) scores upon entry into the program positively correlated with ABE completion. Watson points out the need for research studying the effects of testing on attrition as well as the relationship between instructional strategies and dropout and perseverance.

An evaluation report of Adult Basic Education programs in the state of Pennsylvania during 1985-86, put out by the Pennsylvania State Department of Education (1986), reported success in reducing premature separations from previous years. 30.2% of ABE students separated after 12 or more program contact hours or after meeting personal objectives in less than 12 hours compared to 35.6 in 1980-81. Reasons for separation were not available for 26.7% of the students who left early. "Obtaining more complete information traditionally has been difficult for ABE programs" (p.17). 12.3% exited due to lack of interest and 10.8% exited due to being released or transferred from an institution. Completion rates for this study were based on the passing of entry levels. 40.1% in the 16-24 age group passed entry levels , 39.3% in the 35-44 age group, 36.1% in the 45-54 age group, and only 7.8% in the 65 and older age group. The completion rate for males was 35.2% compared with 40.4% for females. Native Americans completed entry levels 60.7%, whites 41.4%, blacks 34%, Asian or Pacific Islanders 27.9%, and Hispanics 26.3%.

Completion rates for this study also varied by class location. Vocational-technical schools reported a completion rate of 60.3%, secondary schools 48.1%, correctional institutions 41.4%, learning centers 38.7%, community / junior colleges 38.4%, four-year colleges / universities 35.3%, elementary schools 34.1%, community centers 30.4%, hospitals 25.9%, business / work locations 26.1%, county prisons 22.3%, institutions for the handicapped 16.3%, and homes 12.1%.

Efforts to increase retention in Pennsylvania included flexible scheduling, convenient location of classes, networking with public agencies, and public relations campaigns. Other methods included field trips, guest speakers, job placement counselors, issuing diplomas, calling absentee students, and individualizing instruction. The use of peer tutors, starting a job file, and delivering materials via a book mobile were also mentioned.

Demographic Characteristics

A few demographic characteristics, notably age and academic achievement, have been shown to impact continuation in an ABE program until completion. Studies looking at the impact of age on continuation and completion of ABE goals have been inconclusive and often contradictory. Watson (1983) found that age was a factor in persistence. She determined that older students were more likely to persist. Other studies have not been as definitive. Jha (1991) found that age was not a factor even though she cited a number of studies linking youth with attrition (Anderson & Darkenwald, 1979; Boshier, 1973; Bosma, 1988; Diekhoff & Diekhoff, 1984; Smith, 1985; and Weisel, 1980) and persistence with age (Anderson & Darkenwald, 1979; Cramer, 1982; Sainty, 1971). Fasig and Jones (1979), cited in Harman's paper presented in 1983, concluded that non-persisters tended to be older (age 45 and above), female, and unemployed. California's state evaluation report from 1992 found that age didn't seem to have any bearing on completion.

Employment was correlated with withdrawal and persistence in studies cited by Jha in 1991: Anderson and Darkenwald (1979), Bosma (1988), Diekhoff and Diekhoff (1984), and Meyer (1974). She also mentioned that Boshier (1973) determined that unmarried students were more likely to drop out than married students.

Academic factors have also been linked with attrition / persistence in the research. Malizio and Whitney (1981) interviewed 13,000 GED candidates at 250 randomly

selected GED testing sites. 70% had completed the 10th grade and 88% completed 9th or higher. A survey sent to 337 students by Mally and Charuhas (1977) had 26% respond. 34% of those who took an 8-week GED course said they finished the second year of high school. Moore (1982) studied the returns of adults after 5 years of having left the program. and decided that the last grade completed in school was a significant factor. The successful male and female GED candidate completed an average of 9.7 years of school. Preston (1958), cited in Wright (1968), found that people at the extremes of the educational continuum are more likely to persist. Garrison (1985) decided that the last grade completed in school and number of hours worked seemed to play a role in persistence. He also mentioned social and academic integration as being important.

Dirks and Jha (1994) say that academic ability as measured by achievement tests holds promise as a variable in persistence. They cite studies done by: Bosma, 1988; Long, 1983; Martin, 1988; and Smith, 1985. Higher entry level scores are associated with students who successfully complete their goals. Also, studies on academic preparation are mentioned: Kronick & Hargis, 1990; Martin, 1988; Shipp & McKenzie, 1981; and Sainty, 1971. Jha, in her own study in 1991, found that students with higher entry level TABE scores tended to persist. Watson (1983) said academic level was important. Her somewhat contrary findings indicate that those with higher beginning reading levels at enrollment were more likely to quit.

Psychological Factors

Internal variables, also referred to as psychological factors, have been shown to impact perseverance in ABE. These include goal clarity, course relevancy to life, self-esteem, locus of control, presence of support, prior school experience, and determination.

Garrison (1985) discussed course relevancy and goal clarity. Anderson and Darkenwald (1979) are cited as saying that the best predictor of persistence is satisfaction with learning in relation to its helpfulness to the student in meeting his goals. Garrison found that ABE dropouts thought that classes were more relevant but were also clearer about their goals than persisters. He then examined the interaction between course relevancy and scholastic ability and determined that students often set unrealistic goals.

Preston (1993) cited Tinto's research (1975) on goal commitment and Spady's study (1970) on social integration as factors in persistence. He carried their work one step further and concluded that the more strategic the student's goal-commitment (the longer they expected to attend community college classes), the more likely he/she would perceive gains on twenty-three general education goals.

DuBois (1989) found that "having a goal as well as support was important" (p.51). Meyers (1988) also determined that having a definite goal was a factor in persistence. Watson (1983), on the other hand, concluded that reasons for enrolling were not a factor.

Some researchers offered advice on helping students develop goal setting skills. In The Paraprofessional Handbook: A Guide for Adult Homebound Instructors, put out by the Kentucky State Department of Education, instructors are advised to help clarify a student's goals by helping them determine short-term goals that lead to long-term goals. They also need to help students arrive at achievable long-term goals. Fitzgerald and Vorost (1983) presented a paper about using Goal Attainment Scaling (developed by Kiresek and Sherman in 1968) as an assessment tool for progress and to help adults verbalize their goals and plan steps to reach them. Lenz, Ehren, and Smiley (1991) found that "training in goal attainment strategies was effective in increasing the number of projects successfully completed and the quality of goal setting and goal actualization

responses” (p. 166) by learning disabled adolescents. They describe an intervention procedure. The research seems to indicate the importance of clearly defined goals.

DuBois (1989) talked about prior school experiences in her interviews with ABE students. “School for most of them had not been enjoyable. Therefore, deciding to return to school meant facing the past squarely and choosing to overcome the feelings they had previously left behind” (p.43). None of them felt that their teachers were responsible for their problems in school. This could have attributed to feelings of low self-esteem experienced by most ABE students upon enrollment.

Low self-esteem is perhaps one of the most important obstacles for an ABE student to overcome if he/she is to be successful in completing his/her goals. DuBois (1989) said:

A poor self-image in former schooling became a fear of failure upon return and a feeling of high self-esteem after having participated in education...(Students) could talk to others without fear (pp.54-55).

...the majority of Columbus students saw themselves as dumb, slow, incapable of keeping up with the work required (p. 40).

A positive self-image appeared to be the single best motivator for students who were persisting in the program (p. 70).

Meyers (1988) also found that the greater a person’s self-esteem, the more likely they would participate in an ABE program and that being in the program often led to increased feelings of self-esteem.

Other studies have looked at the impact of self-esteem on education. Meyers (1988) cited Cross (1981) as believing “that high self-esteem is a positive factor toward participation in adult education” (p. 30). She cites Campbell (1984) as saying that one can have self-esteem in one area but not in others. Reiff (1982) quoted an adult education student as saying, “Feeling undereducated can lead to a poor self-image” (p. 3). Hathaway and Rhodes (1979) felt that “the common denominator among deprived or disadvantaged students appears to be shattered self-image, little or no sense of

purpose, and a poor understanding of what causes failure or success” (p. 6). Anderson and Nemi (1970), as cited in Rolfe and Wilson (1979), believed that “the disadvantaged are hampered by certain psychological disabilities, including a lack of self-confidence, low self-esteem, and a high degree of dependency” (p. 6). Kreitlow (1981) said that many adult education students have low self-esteem (p. 1). Rolfe & Wilson (1979) found that persisters used more positive adjectives to describe themselves than dropouts. Garrison (1985) also felt that the self-confidence and ideal self discrepancy variable was important. Dropouts had higher discrepancies between self and other than persisters did according to Boshier (1971). Hathaway and Rhodes (1979) concluded that a program offering individualized instruction, good teacher models, and self-image enhancement has the best chance of success.

The presence of support is another psychological factor linked to persistence in Adult Basic Education programs. DuBois (1989) found that “family played a large part in the student’s persistence” (p. 48). “The students saw their teachers as supportive but due in part to the individual nature of the Columbus GED program, few had any support from their classmates” (p. 47). “A few students were very much loners and had no support systems. For them, the desire to achieve something for themselves kept them going during the rough times in class. Teacher support was especially important to them” (p. 69). Meyers (1988) also found support to be influential in persistence. She stated, “If supportive factors outweigh the inhibitive factors, then learners will probably persist in ABE” (p. 111).

Studies relating locus of control (whether a person attributes success or failure to his own behavior or external forces (Rotter, 1982, as cited in Myers, 1988), to continuation and completion of goals have been less conclusive. This issue was discussed at the 1984 Annual Adult Education Research Conference in North Carolina. It was found that more students completed if they were internally motivated and that more dropouts had been referred by social agencies. Newsom and Foxworth (1979) determined that the

higher the grade completed, the greater the locus of control. A link emerges between grade completed, level of self-esteem, locus of control, and dependency characteristics. Another study by Richards (1983) found no connection between an internal locus of control, greater self-esteem, and goal attainment. Meyers (1988) determined that ABE students with an internal locus of control had a greater chance of completing their goals. She also cited Taylor (1984) who found that “adult learners who completed the literacy program were significantly more internal than those who did not complete the program” (p. 37). This area is rich for further exploration.

DuBois (1989) was surprised at the number of people interviewed who said that determination made them persevere. This ended up being one of the five factors impacting goal completion that she mentioned:

Students who persisted in literacy programs did a certain amount of “self talk” in which they use words, proverbs, parables, etc. to convince themselves to remain in a program when they encountered difficult times...This self-talk elicited feelings of determination and stubbornness which were played out as the student attempted to learn the material presented to him/her (p. 81).

Quigley discussed personal motivation in a staff development workshop that was included as part of a report by the Pennsylvania State Department of Education. He listed a number of reasons that adults drop out of adult education classes: transportation difficulties, child care arrangements, family health, conflicts with the time classes are scheduled, lack of family support, and fear of failure. But, he added that “all of these problems have solutions if the students have personal motivation. Without personal motivation, a genuine desire to achieve, each one of the problems listed becomes the reason students use for dropping out” (p. 5). His findings were based on studies and surveys in the Pittsburgh area.

Situational Factors

Situational factors are not discussed in depth here because it is a given that they can all be reasons for dropout: finances, economic status, family situation, alcohol /

drug use, marriage, employment, health, relocation, transportation, and lack of time. These are listed on ABE separation forms as possible reasons for early exit. Jha (1991) cites work by Mezirow et al. (1975) and Moss and Richardson (1967) that listed class and work schedules and moving as contributors to attrition. She cites others who mentioned transportation, time constraints, health, employment, and family problems as reasons for leaving ABE programs (Darkenwald, 1986; Rachal, Jackson, & Leonard, 1987; and Wheaton, 1976). Other studies mentioned by Jha related job and time of class with completion (Cramer, 1982); class scheduling, day care problems, transportation and location, health and family problems, and lack of interest (Sticht, 1988-89); and reported non-school related factors as the major problems contributing to attrition (Jackson-Mayer et al., 1987). She says that Cramer (1982) found that 61% of ABE completers didn't name situational reasons as interfering with attendance, while only 19.6% of dropouts gave no situational reasons for lack of attendance. Jha (1991) said that "situational reasons may often be given for dropout because they are more socially acceptable" (p. 20). Clark (1986, cited in Jha, 1991) said educators tend to minimize the significance of situational factors, believing them to be beyond the control of ABE. This follows from the belief that high dropout rates are from failure of students instead of from failure of the instructors of service. If situational factors do play such a large role in early attrition from ABE programs, ways to help students counteract these barriers need to be addressed from a program level.

Program Variables

While demographic characteristics perhaps cannot be changed and situational factors are often difficult to surmount, the areas that can most be influenced by studies such as this are psychological factors and program variables. Indeed, program aspects are perhaps what can be changed the most readily. Things such as class size, class

time, location of lessons, number of tutors working with a person, quality of instruction, and selection of materials are within the control of ABE programs.

Previous studies have looked at some of these areas. Jha (1991) listed research related to class size. She says that Boshier (1973) found that a class with fewer than nine students had a lower dropout rate and that Wheaton (1976) also suggested smaller classes to aid in retention. Darkenwald (1981, as cited in Jha) found that dropout rates were fewer for classes meeting less than 20 session. Weisel (1980), again cited in Jha, found that students who attended in the afternoon participated in more classes. Meyers (1988) listed regular attendance as one of the five factors she determined to impact goal completion. Course relevancy has been discussed previously (see goals).

DuBois (1989) found success to be a major factor in goal completion: "When they returned to education and began to succeed, they also saw this as a personal affirmation of their talents" (p. 47). Progress can be both a program variable and a psychological factor. Instructors can be instrumental in helping the students to realize that they are progressing.

Support can also be a program variable in addition to a psychological factor. Jha (1991) cites the following studies: counseling on an individual basis (Arruze & Daniel, 1987; Jackson et al., 1987; and Wheaton, 1976), one-to-one interactions (Reder, 1985), and individual pre-enrollment counseling as well as continuous one-on-one follow-up (Indians and Adult Basic Education: A Handbook, 1987).

Other studies mentioned the importance of supportive counseling in goal completion. Mikulecky and D'Adamo-Weinstein, (1991) said that counseling is an integral part of the more effective workplace literacy programs. A 1981 report by the Indiana Vocational Technical College mentioned greater retention of ABE students with counseling. According to a 1987 California state evaluation report (for fiscal year 1986-87), "two of the sites that had the best retention rates (72% and 67%) had a placement center that oriented students to (the) program and provided formalized tracking of students

between instructional levels and program components” (p. 13). A paper by McKenzie (1986), presented at the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education, stressed the importance of counseling. She said that students need to be aware of the whole process of goal attainment so that pitfalls can be anticipated and dealt with appropriately: “It was found in this study of 194 adults over six years, that knowledge of the process increased one’s efficiency within the cycle” (p. 13). Supportive counseling should be a part of every ABE program.

DuBois found that supportive teachers aided retention in ABE programs: “They were surprised at the way they were being treated by the teachers. Assignments were optional. They were not criticized if they skipped class. In short, they were being treated as adults” (p. 68). Butler and McNeely (1987) found that the presence and assistance of caring and well qualified staff can make a difference in student outcomes. Often teachers of Adult Basic Education are not regarded as professionals by others in the field of education, but they in fact work with the most difficult students, the students that the traditional educational system has failed. Special skills are needed to work with these students in addition to a solid knowledge base. Quality of instruction, improved through staff development, needs to be considered in regard to student outcomes when looking at program variables.

Perin and Greenberg (1994) felt that program design is one of the most important factors in student persistence. They felt further research was needed on the impact of students’ perceptions of how close they are to specific educational goals at various points in the course. D’Amico-Samuels (1990, cited by Perin and Greenberg, 1994) asked urban, male, African American students what program characteristics encouraged them to persist. Responses were program support services, geographical location, class schedule, the content of instruction, and the quality of teaching. They also mentioned McKillop (1991) who argued that retention rates could increase by intake procedures that were sensitive to student characteristics, flexible scheduling,

availability of computer-based learning, counseling support, and appropriate assessment methods.

Some authors had specific suggested retention strategies. The Oklahoma State Dept. of Education, in its 1989 Handbook for Adult Basic Education, said that students should be given a skill that they can use in the first class. They need to be given an opportunity to succeed. Harman (1983) said that “high risk” learners need to be identified through a profile of participants. Demographics, goals, locus of control, support systems, etc. could be part of an intake process. He talked about the necessity of involving important others in the remediation process and preparing them for changes. He said that a policy regarding orientation, participation, on-going progress, termination, and follow-up needs to be developed in adult learning programs. There is no doubt that programs could further impact retention of ABE students.

The most common reasons mentioned for retention and goal completion of adult education students have been covered in this review. Also, the need for more research in the field, particularly qualitative, has been shown. It is time to test the research and take it one step further, to see if characteristics and factors found by others hold true for Adult Basic Education students in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. That is best accomplished by their own words.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The method chosen for this research project was qualitative. Myers (1988) concurs with Boraks (1981) that “the methodology should be directly influenced by the specific requirements of the research question” (p.45). Attempting to identify common variables or characteristics of goal completers in an ABE program can be done best by analyzing

the students' own words and responses obtained from interviews. The answers to the question emerge from their own viewpoints of their learning experiences.

Qualitative research is analyzed inductively as opposed to deductively according to Meyers (1988). Bogdan and Biklen (1982), as cited in Myers(1988), state that these types of researchers “do not search out data or evidence to prove or disprove hypotheses they hold before entering the study; rather the abstractions are built as the particulars that have been gathered are grouped together” (p.45). From their own words patterns come forth and conclusions can be drawn.

Rockhill (1982), as cited in DuBois (1989), assessed different methods used to gather research. She maintains that “the scope of inquiry is limited by the nature of the focus of the research method” (pp.23-24). Furthermore, she states that research should be on intent of meaning, not causation. Rockhill, as cited in Myers (1988), says that qualitative research should be the method used to study participation in adult education. She states that it “opens up the possibility of a totally new line of inquiry—the search into unasked questions which may lead to deeper insight into the phenomenon of participation”(p.46)

Other researchers have agreed on the value of qualitative research for answering the type of question posed here. Cross (1979), as cited in Dubois (1989), felt that something besides external factors were operating on the literacy student which couldn't be measured by quantitative research. Anderson and Darkenwald (1979), cited in Dubois (1989), thought that variables identified as affecting participation in previous research may have little effect on persistence. Garrison (1985) was also mentioned by Dubois (1989) as supporting a more holistic approach to the research questions involving literacy students. Jha (1991), toward the conclusion of his study, acknowledged the pitfalls of traditional quantitative research in attempting to understand non-continuation of ABE:

“results of this and other research seem to confirm the limited nature of this approach. Much of the literature alluded to the idea that a more multi-dimensional approach is needed. Intensive qualitative studies, such as in-depth interviews with participants and investigations of socio-cultural contexts, offer a promising focus for additional research” (p.70).

A qualitative approach, chosen for this study, was advocated by previous research as well as determined by the size of the sample for this project. Quantitative research is more useful when analyzing large amounts of data gathered from surveys or questionnaires involving a more extensive sample. Even at that, previous researchers have pointed out that data obtained from end-of-the-year reports is only as accurate as the tutor filling out the forms (Jha, 1991) and is subject to variance according to the perceptions and values of the tutors (Watson, 1983). Data can also vary based on interpretation of ABE student data sheets from agency to agency and from state to state. Furthermore, many students who exit before completion of their goals disappear and tutors either have to guess at the reason or leave it incomplete on the form. Much data is unavailable or incomplete. Recording the students' own words and asking for their insights based on their own experiences as ABE students seems a better route to obtaining the desired information.

The data for this study was gathered through taped interviews of roughly one hour each. Participants answered background questions then proceeded with the nine interview questions.

Confidentiality Agreement / Background Information / Interview Question Sheets

For the purpose of this study, the background information sheet was revised twice, the confidentiality agreement form four times, and the interview questions five times. Having originally designed a quantitative survey sheet consisting of sixty questions encompassing everything the research said could be a factor in either dropout or persistence in ABE programs, the focus was narrowed to just nine questions along with a demographics sheet when it was deemed that a qualitative approach would be more

appropriate. (The first revision of the questions along with the original background information sheet are included in Appendix D, pages 1-4, and labeled “Trial Run; the final version of both is in Appendix E, pages 1-6).”

A confidentiality agreement form was written to guarantee participants anonymity. Also, it ascertained that they were participating of their own free will, could leave the interview at any time, and didn't have to answer any questions that they felt uncomfortable with.(A copy is included in Appendix C, page 2).

The Background Sheet was designed to provide information such as gender, age, marital status, time spent in ABE program, prior school experience, location of lessons, number of tutors worked with, presence/absence of support, grade completed in school, diagnosed learning disabilities, medical problems, perceived self-direction in approaching tasks, etc. The first revision included a question about positive prior learning experiences as well as negative ones. The section on length of time spent in the program and number of exits from the program was simplified. Participants were told that if they couldn't remember, the information could be obtained from their ABE files (with their permission). The purpose for inclusion of a demographics section was to check for common characteristics among goal completers. Questions pertaining to identified variables from previous research, such as age, prior academic achievement, support, etc. were included (see literature review).

The interview questions underwent extensive revision. Condensed from the original sixty questions, they were designed to probe some of the previously identified variables such as having a well-defined goal, experiencing progress, self-esteem, support, relevancy of course material, and program aspects (see literature review). The original interview questions (labeled “Trial Run” in Appendix D, pages 3-4) were administered in a trial run interview (Appendix D, P1, pages 1-7). They were determined to be too leading and were reworded in a more open-ended format. Also, the trial run participant suggested a sheet of interview questions for the participant as well as the interviewer so

she wouldn't have to rely on just auditory memory. Her suggestion was incorporated into the interview sheet revisions.

The final revision of the interview questions consisted of three parts (see Appendix E, pages 3-6). A brief introductory paragraph was read to each person explaining that the purpose of the research was to attempt to identify common characteristics among goal completers in the ABE program. The first part was completely open-ended (questions one through four) and asked the participants what their goals were in joining the ABE program and what helped them reach their goals. If more than one thing was mentioned, they were asked which of those things was the most important. Then they were asked if they had ever thought of quitting. Those that responded "yes" were asked what kept them going. This was followed by a more general question asking them to mention anything that might have hindered their efforts to reach their goals. If they experienced difficulty comprehending the question, a few examples were given of hindrances such as transportation, lack of child care, etc. (read from the interviewer sheet, Appendix E, pages 3-4).

Part two (questions five through nine) was introduced by a brief paragraph stating that previous research had explored some things that may or may not impact goal completion. They were asked to consider these things and decide for themselves whether or not they had any influence in keeping them going. These were included in case these things might have had relevance for them but weren't considered when asked the first two questions. This section is delineated by a dotted line in the interview transcripts to show they were suggested as possible variables (see transcripts in Appendix E, P1-P11).

A summary of the content of questions five through nine follows. They were asked if seeing that they were capable of making progress had any bearing on their persistence. This was followed up by a question asking them how they knew they were progressing. Question six asked if any of the subjects studied inspired them to continue. If so, they

were asked what the subjects were and why they were important to them. Question seven explored program variables such as location, time, etc. and its possible bearing on continuation. Self-esteem was the focus of question eight. Completers were asked how they felt when they first entered the program and if that changed while they were in the program or at their completion of their goals. If they responded positively, they were asked in what ways their feelings about themselves had changed. Question nine looked at the presence or absence of support while they were working on their goals. If this question needed clarification, they were given examples of possible support such as family, friends, and agency, etc. (from interviewer sheet, Appendix E, pages 3-4). Those that indicated that they had support were asked who or what supported them and how the person showed support. If they needed examples of ways support can be demonstrated, a few things such as encouragement, helping with other responsibilities, etc. were mentioned (see interviewer sheet).

Part three of the interview questions brought the participants back to the first two questions. After considering other possible factors and whether or not they had any influence in their persistence until goal completion, they were once again asked what had the greatest impact on keeping them going until they attained their goal.

A trial run interview with the original interview questions greatly facilitated revision of the questions (Appendix D, P1, pages 1-7). With the revised format, it was time to obtain a sample population of participants.

Sample

Finding subjects to interview was an interesting endeavor. It was determined that even though the researcher was a home tutor for ABE, other tutors' students should be interviewed as well in order not to bias the results. While the easiest method of finding participants would have been to ask fellow tutors for names of students who had recently completed their goals, the administration felt that taking names randomly out of

the computer database would provide a more arbitrary method. Consequently, names of twenty-seven recent goal completers were supplied to the researcher.

Of the twenty-seven possible subjects, only four ended up being interviewed. Five from the list either had had their phones disconnected, unlisted, or were out of service. Two others had no phones. Two had left the area. One former student was in the hospital having a baby. One person answering the telephone said that no one by that name lived at that number. Of the remaining sixteen, a couple couldn't be reached. The subjects were called based on town and gender. It was hoped that the participants would be different ages, genders, and have worked with different tutors. Everyone that was actually contacted gladly agreed to be interviewed in order to further research in goal completion.

A tutor from a more rural town supplied the name of a recent completer and that person was contacted and included to have that geographic area represented.

The researcher also interviewed five of her own former students who had completed their goals in the ABE program. They were of varying ages, gender, and had differing initial goals.

Ten former students comprised the sample to be interviewed and were assigned numbers P2-P11 to protect their anonymity. P1 is a former student of the researcher who generously agreed to be interviewed for the trial run. She is a female, aged 52, who received her GED after leaving the program a couple of times to raise a family, etc. Although her data was not included in the analysis of the other ten participants' data due, to revision of the questions subsequent to her interview, a transcript of her interview is included in Appendix D (P1, pages 1-7) and yields further insight into the question of why people continue while others drop out.

The ten people interviewed for the study provided a more varied sample than could have been hoped for initially. Six were female and four male. Three were under twenty years of age (two males and one female), two were in their thirties (both females), three

in their forties (one female and two males), and two were in their sixties (both females). Five were home students of the researcher, one a home student of another tutor in a different town, three had come to the Newport Learning Center in Newport, Vt., and one had studied in a much smaller learning center in a rural town with another tutor.

Seven enrolled with getting a GED as their primary goal. One person wanted U.S. citizenship. One desired improvement in math and a driver's permit and another wished help with math in order to pass her college courses. One of the participants, after achieving her GED, enrolled two more times for math help in order to pass college courses. She now possesses her B.A.

The ten participants are quite representative of the population that normally accesses the services of ABE in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. Their responses, though unique to each individual, provide a snapshot profile of the attitudes and drives of at least this group of people in this rural corner of Vermont.

Interviewing Process

The researcher traveled to the homes of eight of the participants and conducted taped interviews of approximately one hour in length. One participant was met in a house he was constructing and another came into the learning center in Newport. After filling out a confidentiality agreement (see appendix), questions from the background information sheet and interview sheet were asked and responses tape recorded. Transcripts of the ten interviews are provided in Appendix E (P2-P11). The introductory paragraph and the paragraph at the beginning of part two of the interview questions, although read to each person, were eliminated from transcripts to avoid needless repetition. Former students taking part in this study are initially referred to as participant # 1, participant # 2, etc. and later abbreviated to P1, P2, etc. Participants were promised a copy of the results if they wished. The people interviewed seemed happy to be able to

offer their opinions and insights for this research project as well as to help others down the road who might be struggling to reach their goals.

Data Analysis

Once the ten interviews were concluded, they were transcribed to written form in order to be analyzed. A huge grid was constructed on poster board and responses to each of the questions recorded. Possible hindrances to goal attainment were highlighted in blue and factors that may have contributed to persistence were coded in green. Types of responses to each question were totaled at the bottom of each column in order to identify common characteristics or factors that may contribute to persistence until goal attainment. Any time more than six out of ten people responded the same way to a question it was noted as a common characteristic or possible influential factor.

One person may have mentioned more than one thing in response to a question. All responses were recorded. If more than ten things were mentioned for a particular question (see tables in Appendix B, pages 1-5), then some people talked about more than one item in response. Some answers to other questions provided further insight on responses to previous questions and were noted as such on the grid. Tabulated results of the answers to the background information and nine major interview questions are given in the next two sections according to the order that the questions were asked. This is followed by a discussion of the results.

RESULTS

Background Information

Of the ten people interviewed, six were female and four male. Six were single while working on their goals (four of the females) and four were married.

Location of study covered a broad spectrum. Four studied in rural towns (population under 5,000) in their homes, two in rural areas in their homes, three in the Newport

Learning Center (small city, population slightly over 5,000), and one in a learning center in a rural town (<5,000). It should be noted that six out of the ten were met at home and eight out of the ten worked with only one tutor.

The researcher was interested in exploring the possibility that length of time elapsed before a goal was reached or time spent actually working on a goal may affect persistence. This was posed as two separate questions. The first attempted to determine how much time passed from the point when the student first entered the ABE program until he/she achieved his/her goal. Many students come into the ABE program and exit a number of times before they actually reach their goals. This question attempted to ascertain how much time passed between first entry and achievement. By asking how many times a student had left the program and the duration of stay each time they enrolled (double-checked with file information), it was determined how long they had actually worked on their goal(s). Of particular note, in this study group of goal completers, seven out of ten hadn't exited the program before completion. Also, seven out of ten spent less than a year actually working on their goals. (One spent a year, one a year and three months, and another two years and two months). Of the seven, less than a year elapsed from the time they entered the program for the first time until their goal(s) was achieved. One woman enrolled three times (three year time span) but only spent ten months actually working on her goal.

A few areas didn't yield conclusive results. Ages seemed fairly well distributed (see sample section). Five were raising a family and five weren't (three males and two females weren't). Five were not employed as they pursued their goals (three females, two younger males), three were employed, and two were working part-time.

No pattern seemed to exist between either the last grade the student completed in school or the last grade his/her parents completed. One student completed the 7th grade, one the 8th, two the 9th, two the 11th, and two had attended school for twelve years but missed graduation by either just one credit or a fraction of a credit. The

grades that their parents completed was equally distributed. No pattern appeared to exist between the grade the parents completed in school and the grade that their children completed (One student that dropped out in 8th grade had parents that graduated from high school; another that dropped out in 9th thought that both parents were college graduates). Mothers and fathers seemed to have either the same educational level or the woman had a higher level. It was interesting to discover that four students had no idea what grade their fathers completed in school and two had no idea what grade their mothers completed.

Five of the ten participants in the study had a prior negative school experience (three said “no,” one “not really,” and one “so-so.”) Of those five, three felt that kids picked on or made fun of them and three couldn’t get along with their teachers (see Appendix B, page 1 for list).

This question yielded some interesting insights. Participant # 4 had the following comments:

I had really low self-esteem as a child...I felt like I couldn’t do it. Because I felt so low about myself...My self-esteem was so low I felt I couldn’t learn. I wasn’t smart enough to learn. It was all in my head, but that’s what I felt at the time.

Participant # 5 said:

I had quite a negative experience...the way they dealt with education was more centered around discipline than it was about the learning. (I disliked) the material they were working with. I got picked on a lot and that distracted me from what we were there for...I was an emotional basket case in junior high.

Participant # 6 responded she couldn’t get along with the teachers, didn’t do well in math and found it hard to fit in (“My parents are kind of hippies.”) After being home schooled in 7th and 8th grades, she went away to a boarding school. Having come from a small family farm, she found it difficult to fit in with the other kids:

...there were a lot of really rich kids that didn’t have any respect for anything really. Everything was disposable to them. It made it kind of hard to come from a farm, to come from the Northeast Kingdom and go to where people were all from

Boston and New York...Kids ...didn't have respect for farms...I know how hard it is to farm and everything. Kids are like, „Ooh, you smell like cowshit.' It rubbed me the wrong way.

... but I learned a lot from the negatives. I think even if I were in school right now, it might be hard for me to be there and not want to drop out. I'd still be learning. I feel like I have to look at things with that attitude... No matter what it is, I have to learn something

Participant # 7 also had negative school experiences:

I couldn't see well... I was never given any extra help...There was an obvious preference for the boys and the richer girls...I was a poor child from the wrong side of the tracks...I was passed along because my English, my language skills were so great...I should not have been. I figure I was at the third or fourth grade level math-wise...I was reading Shakespeare and stuff in the fifth grade, but I couldn't multiply.

Participant # 10 said :

I really don't see too much negative or positive tipping on either side. I just went to school. The only difficulty I had in grade school was when I started in first grade, I couldn't speak English. That gave me a difficult first year. My first grade teacher was very . . . not mean, but . . . I guess you could say that was a negative experience in first grade. It was a bad start to school... I stayed back a year in third and fourth grade. The language was a definite barrier, sure. I couldn't communicate with my first grade teacher

Five of the ten participants said that they had a prior positive experience, one had no positive experiences, one responded “some,” and three responded “not really” (see Appendix B, page 1). Two of the five with positive experiences also had had negative experiences and one that had “some” positive experiences had also had negatives ones. Two with both positive and negative experiences mentioned the impact of special teachers. Of the three that had either a positive experience or “some” as well as a negative experience, two mentioned the importance of creative writing, and one said that she loved reading and working with words (see appendix for list of positive experiences). P7 commented as follows:

I wanted to keep on learning more words. I wanted to quit school when I was fifteen because I was so embarrassed about my math. I was in basic math for like

four years in a row. In the same little rut I was in, and not getting any one-on-one help...it takes me a while to get over something that scares me, but once I've got it, I got it. Just give me some help...I loved reading so much. Lots of good books in school! If you quit school, you don't get to read.

It's interesting to note that those that enjoyed or excelled in the language arts needed help in math before taking the GED test. Another person also needing math help mentioned that he did very well in reading.

Of the ten people involved in this study, none were formally diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school. When asked if they felt that they learned differently than the other kids, six responded "no," one thought she was too dumb to learn, one commented that it took her longer to learn if she wasn't interested in the material, and only two felt they learned differently. P4 said:

I felt like I was too dumb to learn. That was my own feelings; nobody made me feel that way. I had really low self-esteem as a child...I felt like I couldn't do it. Because I felt so low about myself. I felt like I was dumb. Too dumb to learn. (She now has her B.A.)

P5 responded affirmatively to this question:

I was considered one of the brighter kids in the school... I felt that I learned differently. I felt that everyone else was learning more by rote. Before I even knew what to call it, I felt that I learned more in a creative way and more hands-on. Everyone else was like a machine, just another number. I'm number five, right? It's hard for me to explain exactly how I learn differently. I always felt different from the crowd... I always stayed on my own, anyway. So I had an original way of going about things. I liked to just delve into it. I liked creative writing, where we'd all get together and brainstorm ideas. Not just like, you get up to the blackboard and "Two plus two is this, now repeat after me . . ." like that stereotypical public school teacher. I just liked the more creative style in learning experience.

P6 said "no" initially but added that she might learn math "a bit differently" and "have to pay more attention than other kids in math."

Seven of the ten participants in this study had medical problems as a child. One had scarlet fever and undiagnosed asthma. Another person had tubes in his ears in 1st and 2nd grade (P8): "I had to get tubes in my ears because I couldn't hear words

properly...I'd hear sounds and pronounce them different." Participant # 7 had trouble with her eyesight:

If you can't see the blackboard, you don't do well...My mother was finally forced to bring me to get glasses, because the schools had said, "She needs glasses." It took her about a year and a half to finally get me the glasses I needed. It was the summer before I went to fourth grade. I had major problems: headaches, dizzy spells. I would put my head down on the desk and rest because squinting and writing and squinting and stuff will give me a headache trying to focus and I was right up at the front of the class.

None of the participants were medicated as children. Two were on medication when involved with the ABE program (one had oxygen for asthma and took heart medication, another took medication for diabetes). One person responded, "I don't think so" when asked this question.

The question on self-determination, along with its two follow-ups yielded somewhat ambiguous results. Originally these questions attempted to address the issue of locus of control, but based on analysis of the responses and further consideration of the questions, it was determined that they actually dealt with self-determination. Six considered themselves more individuals designed to set their own course than followers. One considered herself more in charge of her own destiny, except when it came to math (P6). Another stated that she used to be a follower but was now more of an individual (P7): "I used to be a follower, but I am no longer insecure in who I am. Number 7 is a very strong individual determined to set her own course!" P9 considered herself more of an individual but mentioned that she can follow as well. P2 wasn't sure: "I like to do for myself, but I'm not so sure...If I didn't have Frank, I don't know. I'd be lost without him."

Five people stated that they'd prefer to try a task on their own first, then ask for guidance if needed. Four said that it would depend on the task. One definitely preferred to try it on his own. P6 responded as follows:

Some of each. Usually I do something better if I do it myself, if I figure out how to do it myself. A lot of times it's hard for me to ...start a project on my own, get the confidence to say, "OK, I'm going to build this thing." I was to build a hot box to put spinach and lettuce in. I had this old window, and the window had this junk taken out of it all the way around three sides and one side didn't. I said, "OK, one board has to be higher than the other one." I got really frustrated, "Mom, how do I make this?" I felt like I really should of made it myself and not had her help me, but I didn't. Little things like that... I would rather do it myself, but sometimes I fall back on people.

P7 agreed that she'd rather try it first on her own:

I would rather have the chance to figure it out for myself and then ask for help when I need it. I'm a firm believer in you ask for help when you need it. There's nothing demeaning about asking for help . . . when necessary.

P9 had the same approach:

I usually try to do it myself, and then if I can't do it or if I have a problem, I have someone show me how to do it. I start out on my own. Like my last test, I went on my own and I went through the book and I took the test and I passed it!

P10 said that it depended on the task:

It would depend on how sure I felt about the situation. If I have some experience even close to the task at hand, I would probably undertake it without any help... it depends on if I felt I could do it than I would try it. If it felt overwhelming, then I would ask for help.

P2 also stated that whether or not she asked for help before approaching something would depend on the task:

That depends on what the task is. I don't know quite how to answer that... If I was talking about regular work, I don't like a list, because if you gave me a list a mile long, I'd break my neck trying to get it all done. Like when I did the housework. They'd bring me a list and say, do what you have time to do. I'd always pick the extras first, then I'd have to have time to do the regulars. That's what did me in... And I'd work right out straight. I'm not good with lists. I might be on schoolwork, but I certainly wasn't on regular work.

I have to confess, in late years, my husband . . . everything that comes in he tends for me. Partly because of my shakiness and partly because of my eyes... Some things, I'd rather do myself. It's easier. Now, if I could do my own work now, it's easier for me to do my own work than to sit here and ask you to do this or do that. I hate giving orders. If I'm working with somebody, that doesn't bother me. If

Frank says, "I think you should do it like this, you should do it like that," which he did once, I told him, "Why don't you get out of the kitchen and go sit down?" I don't like somebody to tell me how to do things just because they're bored. If I'm getting paid, fine.

People clearly had a little trouble answering this question. This may have had to do with the wording of the question or confusion about what the question was really asking.

The second follow-up to the self-determination question asked if they preferred to have assignments or determine for themselves a set amount of work to accomplish. Seven preferred no set amount and three liked flexibility within certain parameters. P6 preferred to be told, "Here's what I'd like you to do. Do of that what you can." P4, echoing the sentiments of those who didn't like a require amount of work to be done by the next time said:

"In real life, not being of school age, not setting a certain amount would be better because there are many other things in life as an adult, and school is a secondary thing. At school age, school should be a primary thing."

This last question and its follow-ups did not seem to clearly address locus of control as anticipated. If anything, they showed a slight preference for self-direction in approaching tasks as opposed to seeking guidance at the onset.

Indeed, the entire concept of what is meant by locus of control and how it can be measured needs to be looked at in future research.

Nine Interview Questions

The background information sheet yielded demographic data, explored participants' attitudes on prior school experience and feelings about how they learned, and attempted to determine whether they were internally or externally driven when it came to approaching a learning task. The next nine questions continue the probe and provide data on issues such as goals, thoughts of quitting, progress, program variables, self-esteem and support.

Seven of the ten people interviewed in this study joined ABE with the goal of wanting to get their GED (see graph on Appendix A, page 1). Of those seven, two wanted to go on to college and one wanted his GED for personal satisfaction and to be eligible for better jobs. One initially enrolled to encourage her husband to get his GED and decided to continue when he stopped coming. Of the three non-GED participants, one signed up to study for her U.S. citizenship and to have something to do; one wanted to get her driver's permit, improve in math, and learn computer (She has subsequently taken college math and computer classes); and another wished to improve in math and computer skills in order to pass her community college classes (see graph of goals in appendix).

After being asked what their initial goals were in joining the program, participants were asked what things helped them reach their goals (see Appendix B, page 2 for distribution of responses). Six out of ten responded that determination was a factor. Five out of ten said that their tutors helped them reach their goals. Three mentioned support from family and friends. Three said it was the goal that kept them going.

The researcher was a little surprised at the role determination seemed to play in persistence. This ended up being "the" most important factor that the majority of the participants felt helped them to continue until they reached their goals. P9 said, "I had that in my mind that that's what I wanted to do. I was bound and determined that I was going to do it and I went right ahead." P11 concurred: "I just wanted to achieve it, that's all. Nothing's going to stand in my way. I'm just going to do it." A central question to further research should be to ask what, if any, external factors influence determination.

When asked which of the things mentioned in question one were most important in helping the participant to reach their goals, again determination was the overriding factor (Appendix B, page 2). Four stated that it was definitely determination. One said it was equally determination and her tutor. Another that had mentioned determination and

her tutor in question one changed her mind this time and said it was her tutor. Two mentioned the goal. This question seemed to generate a little confusion on the part of some of the participants. They were being asked to isolate which of the things they had mentioned in question one as being most important. Some came up with things they hadn't said previously. Some had trouble deciding what had the greatest impact.

Interesting commentary was generated by the first two questions. P3 said:

I found it helpful having you come to my home, because you seemed to come right after class or the next day while things were still fresh in my mind. That was really helpful to me because I lose it real quick... Kept me from feeling lost, too. Like algebra . . . I thought I was I was pretty lost in algebra. But I managed it and got a B.

P5 added the following:

I would say support from my family and friends helped a lot, Jasmine especially. And her mother. Kept me going. It was an inner will thing. The material did interest me too. I liked to study, I like academic work. If something interests me, I'm going to follow it. I did set it up as a goal. "You're going to try to get the best score possible. You're going to participate in this, you're going to do this." And then you end up doing it.

I would say it would be my own will. Anyone who's doing anything, that's what really counts. You can get outside support which would help immensely, still, it's you. You have to do it.

In response to what helped her reach her goals P7 said that her tutor kept her going, but that her children also played an integral part:

My children and my tutor not giving up on me. I thought that I was stupid. I would have troubles with it. I would get so frustrated that I was convinced that I was a moron. My tutor and my children never, ever said anything demeaning to me and encouraged me throughout it all. My children... I enjoyed seeing them feeling proud of their mother. She was achieving her goals, even though they knew I was frightened. I don't like failing and I don't like doing anything if I think there's a chance of failing. They never gave up on me.

(So they'd encourage you and ask you how it was going?)

Yes. And pester me if I said I'm not doing my homework tonight. Sitting down at the kitchen table at homework time, if I didn't want to do my homework well. My children would... They were very proud. It made me feel good to set a good example

and know that I was frustrated and having a hard time and they could see that I was frustrated and having a hard time, but I stuck it out.

Bless your little notes that said I'm not stupid on my homework! "Great Job!"—those helped.

Participants, after considering what helped them reach their goals, were asked if they ever thought of quitting. Five responded “no” and five answered “yes.” One of those that said “no”, had actually enrolled three times before reaching her goal.

When asked what kept them going when they thought of quitting, two said it was their determination (One added wanting her degree). Two mentioned their tutor (one said it was her children as well as her tutor and another mentioned his improved math comprehension in addition to his tutor). One woman quit to help with her two sons' weddings and then came back. The woman who was reminded that she had exited the program twice said it must have been her determination that made her come back. (see Appendix B, page 3 for list).

Further insights were offered into why people persevered when they contemplated quitting. P5 said, “I was just determined to fill that gap in my education and my knowledge.” P7, referring to the tutoring she received commented :

I was having a hard time with memorizing my multiplication so it would come automatically. With the fear of them I still have problems. But I can figure (it) out now, and I know I have the skills to figure it out, but I did not think that I did.

P11 (referring to math) said that,

Something wouldn't sink in and then it would snap and then come around. I thought I was an idiot. (*What kept you going?*) Tanya (tutor)...going to take a club to me.

P3 didn't think of quitting because she knew she had to do it and it made sense when the tutor left. P6 also never thought of quitting because meeting with a tutor once a week and doing the work was an accomplishable goal.

Next former students were asked what hindered their efforts to reach their goals. Nothing really conclusive emerged from this question. Five people felt that they faced hindrances to completion of goals at various points. Two mentioned problems with math (and another talked about difficulty with math in a later question). Two mentioned lack of self-confidence (one added fear of inadequacy and another nervousness). One thought he couldn't learn. P8 said "no" to this question but added that scoring lower on the English test than he wanted to set him back a little. It helped when he got a higher score on the second pre-test. P7 offered the following:

The only thing that really hindered me was myself. My own fear of inadequacy... My lack of self-confidence? It was all my own doing. I did not have the confidence in myself to keep on going. I didn't think that I could do certain points. Each time that I felt that, my tutor would spend extra time explaining it to me. Then I would realize that I really wasn't a moron. So, I'd keep on going.

Math was both a hindrance and a source of motivation for P11:

Math. That was one I was kind of lousy at. I thought I'd do better than I did in the actual studying part. Even in the test part there were more examples. Instead of saying 2 and 2 is 4, they'd put it into writing. And that's probably where I'd make most of my mistakes. ..That was one time I said I'd quit.

(It made you think about quitting but it also inspired (you) to go on?)

Right. I was mad about it. I was thinking, "How stupid you are." There isn't anything I can't build. When I came to the math here on paper, there was so much of it I just couldn't remember all these little things.

Data gathered from question number five did yield important results. Nine out of ten people said that making progress was a factor in keeping them going. One wasn't sure.

Participants were then asked how they knew that they were progressing (see Appendix B, page 4). Four determined progress by their GED scores. Two said that they were receiving better grades in their college classes. Two knew that they were understanding more. One woman's husband quizzed her on the citizenship questions. Other things mentioned were: passing GED pre-test scores, feedback from the tutor and doing the work without cheating, and being able to do the work after assignments and

practice. One girl wasn't sure that she had make any progress until she only had two questions left to go on the math GED test.

Participants expressed their feelings about making progress. P7 commented:

I had more faith in myself... A very large motivator. I was understanding. In my mind numbers always looked like some sort of ancient writing. Some sort of words I couldn't understand! You can't just spell a word with numbers...

P8 mentioned his low test score:

...with that low test grade in my English, when I took that science, it kept me going because it was my best score. I was kind of proud of it, so I kept going.

P10 said:

The thing that helped me was the pretests. Knowing that I could pass the pretests. That led me to believe that I could go on and pass the GED... If there would have been little or no progress, I wouldn't have wanted . . . It's hard to say.

P5 stated that,

I didn't have as much faith when I started out as when I actually got into the work and saw that I was capable... I didn't cheat, I did it all. I didn't look at any answers, and it worked.

P9 also was aided in continuation by her progress:

...when I first started, I understood that I had to go through all the courses that they demanded. And I thought, oh my God! I thought I was going to have to do all the history part and that'd be it. But I took one test and passed, and took another one and passed. I kept right on going. I guess it encourages you to keep on going once you've done one and passed. I figured, well, you haven't lost it all after all, in all those years that passed.

When asked if any of the subjects they were studying inspired them to continue, six out of ten responded "no," one "so-so," and only three said "yes." The lady studying for her citizenship like learning about U.S. history because she was originally from Canada and had only studied Canadian history: "I just love history. The only history I hate is British history because of all those kings." P4 said,

The only one of them I liked was English. But I still have trouble with my commas...I like to write, but I just wanted to learn the right way to write.

Most felt that the subjects were just something they had to get through to pass the GED test. P9 commented, "I knew I had to do them and I just went ahead and did them as fast as I could to get it over with." P7, responding "no" to this question added,

I still hate math! I will always, always hate math. It did not make me not want to continue, it just made me . . . I didn't want to give up. I didn't want to fail and let everybody down—my children and my tutor, who believed in me when I wasn't believing in myself. I think I'm always going to hate math... But numbers don't make me want to be ill anymore...I don't feel worthless anymore. I understand it and because I have the math skills I have more confidence about the rest of my life.

(She also commented about studying introduction to computer and the children's story she wrote on the laptop for her daughter). I know that I can write stories and my daughter, since she has passed away, I can use the stories that she has written, and decipher her horrible spelling, and make stories for other children on the computer, since I have the skills. And now I have the confidence to know that I can do a children's story.

The next question the participants addressed was whether or not any aspects of the ABE program helped them reach their goals. Nine mentioned that flexible time was important and seven mentioned the flexible location.). Five said it was extremely helpful having the tutor come to their home. Only three made specific reference to their tutor(s). Two mentioned the variety of materials (including the availability of GED pre-tests. P3 said,

I found it helpful having you come to my home...(Could she have come to a learning center?) I have a hard time with them in school and to transport them back and forth to school—for my school, I don't think I could have found the time to go there...It's hard to go somewheres out when you've got so much going on in your life. I think it's easier when it's at home.

P7, regarding flexible meeting times added,

...when you started coming to me, I had no transportation. I had lots of time, but you worked around my children's schedules. You weren't there when they were at home, but when they were at school.

P2, P4, P5, and P7 didn't have a car when they enrolled in the ABE program. P5 and P7 got their licenses while they were working in the program. Clearly the flexibility of the ABE program in the Northeast Kingdom, allowing students to come to a learning center or be met at home, is helpful for many students.

Participants in the study were then asked about their self-esteem. They were asked what their view of themselves was when they entered the program, if it changed while they were in the program, and if so, how. The results from this question were powerful. Nine people said that they entered the ABE program with low self-esteem and one mentioned being totally "lost" in algebra. Eight people said that their self-esteem changed while involved with the program and the other two answered "some" and "a little bit." All ten said that their self-esteem improved as a result of involvement with the Northeast Kingdom ABE program. When asked how it changed, five people said that they experienced increased confidence, two felt their self-esteem grow once they saw they could do it, and two (P5 and P8) experienced a change in self-esteem after they had accomplished their GED.

Comments to this question were particularly revealing. P2 said,

I'm not one to have a high self-esteem. I think this greatly enhanced that... Because having had two nervous breakdowns [unintell.] I could function enough to learn. When I came out of [unintell.] I couldn't remember faces or names or anything or follow a program on TV, so this was fantastic to be able to learn like that after, I knew it had been years... I can remember laying on the couch and watching that TV and forcing myself to watch "As the World Turns," because I could not follow a TV program. Even though it was quite a few years later, to be able to sit there and to learn, it really has been a great help. I'm somewhere near normal.

P3 commented:

I think it did boost my self-esteem, in the algebra one at least. I felt so lost in algebra. That's when I first contacted you. That's seemed to help once I figured I could do it, then my self-esteem did go up.

P4 said,

My view of myself when I entered the program was that I didn't think that I'd ever finish it, I didn't think I'd be smart enough. It did change while I was in the program because I could really learn. But I never knew it. Because of low self-esteem...I didn't believe in myself. It changed my self-esteem. It made my self-esteem higher... I value myself now, because I know I can do things if I really try.

P5 had similar initial feelings:

I'm pretty hard on myself, at least everyone tells me that. I don't have very high self-esteem. Back then, I was feeling even worse. Completing it did improve my confidence. Definitely. I really try to ignore my self-esteem. Just carry out the task

Regarding her self-esteem P6 said, "...it isn't always that great." P7, reiterated what she had said in response to previous questions:

... my self-esteem was low. I didn't think that I had the ability to learn. Math-wise. For everything else I was very confident. My self-esteem is very high now. I know that I can overcome obstacles that seem like mountains.

P8 also agreed that his self-esteem improved: "I guess just like after I got it (the GED), it brought up my self-esteem, because it's the first real thing in school that I've completed. That was nice." P9 was excited to find out that she still could learn:

...when I entered the program . . . you feel as if you've lost. After all it's been quite a span between high school and the time you go back. You just wonder if you're going to be able to make it. You know you're older and you know you forget and you know you're not as smart as you were when you're eighteen, but you've learned a lot more in between. But what you learn in between isn't all in books. Your family life and everything. You just wonder if you're going to be able to retain it and go on with it. As I said, once you've done one course and you pass it, it encourages you to go on to the other and you keep on going... The confidence is there that you haven't lost it all, that you still can learn and put your thoughts down on paper and do the work... you go in thinking, "Am I going to be able to do it?" You have that fear of not being able to do it. You don't *feel* that you've lost that much, but you're not quite sure. You don't know how things have changed from then until now. It was quite an experience to go back after that length of time... I would love to take my diploma and show it to the guy that told me I couldn't graduate!

P10 said, "My confidence may have been weak or low to start with, but it increased as I passed the pretests. I felt confident I could do it." P11 also lacked self-confidence

when he started in the program: “I guess I felt like an idiot, but that for some reason I could do it. (As time passed...) I was more secure.”

From these comments it is evident that students entering an ABE program have internal as well as external obstacles to overcome. They need a lot of encouragement in order to believe that they can accomplish their goals. It is this researcher’s belief that progress fuels a change in attitude and fosters an increase in self-esteem. Success breeds success. Assessments should be done gradually in order not to scare students away. They have to believe that the goal is attainable.

What role does support play in continuation until goal completion? This was the last issue addressed in the second part of the interview questions. Again, responses yielded a possible common variable (see Appendix B, page 4). Eight of the ten participants in the study said that they had support while working on their goals. One said “no” then went on to mention his tutor. One said that her sole source of support was herself. Seven out of those indicating they had support mentioned their tutor, seven said family, four talked about encouragement from their friends

Methods of support varied (see Appendix B, page 5). “Encouragement” was a word that was repeated over and over. Other people showed support by reviewing with the student or quizzing them. One participant’s mother babysat for her so she could attend classes and study. Another’s parents promised him a party when he got his GED. People’s children supported their efforts through encouragement, interest, and expressions of pride. The Reach-Up Program, designed to give single mothers a chance to obtain marketable skills through classes, paid for child care, transportation, GED tests and college classes. A Reach-Up worker was specifically mentioned because of her ability to create determination through conversation.

Participants offered more information about the support they received. P3, commenting about her tutor, said:

She helped me get through my classes, which I never thought I'd be able to do. Showing me that I *could* do this work that I didn't think I could do... I know that if I didn't pass my two classes, I would have lost my Reach Up and then I wouldn't have continued any education at all.

P5 talked about support in his household as well as from friends:

I would say Jasmine was really the soul . . . she would actually go over the material. I have other books, and we would go over the material together, actually sit down for a couple of hours and review some of this stuff... I had much support. I was very lucky in the group of people I was with. While I was up north there, people here were . . . I had so much support I couldn't get away from it.

P6, in speaking about support from her parents, said:

They were mostly encouraging me... They were like, „Oh you got to get your GED...’ I mean they weren't like scary, but they were like „Whoa! You have to *get* it... before you go anywhere...’ They thought I wasn't working hard enough to do it. "You'd better work on your math, you know..." It might have been a little bit harder, but I find that when I'm independent of them, I actually do a lot better. I don't rely on them to poke at me and "Go! Go! Do it." You know? I probably do things more on my own. I probably even do *more* things on my own than I do when they're egging me on something.

(Discussing tutor support) I was about to leave for southern Vermont... and Barbara said, "Well, there's one more testing time before you leave. OK you have to go and take your math test." I came here before, and looked at some math books. I got all psyched up to do it, wrote lots of lucky things on my overalls. Went and took the math test and I was done. The math test was the last one I took. Barbara helped by saying "You have to take it before you leave"... She was a very powerful...I couldn't have done it without her. I wouldn't have known really where to start without her. She helped me move forward.

P7 felt that it was her tutor and children that gave her support:

They would question me on what I had learned. Todd was terrible! It was particularly bad when I was frustrated because I would tell him "Oh, I haven't learned anything. I don't know, I'm dumb!" And he would say, "No, you're not dumb." And my daughter was very, very proud of me, especially she knows my fear of going fast. Learning to drive was the thing she was proudest of and did not give up on me. My three main people were you Todd and Marie, and none of you gave up on me.

(She discussed sitting down with her children and doing her homework while they did theirs.) My daughter...colored. And harassed me and Todd. But it was our quiet time, and I wouldn't do all my homework, obviously, but I would sit down and it was showing them that we were doing it together. While I would do a page or two and

Jacob would do a small amount of his homework, we were getting homework done. I would finish up when they were asleep... It made me feel good about myself for setting another good example.

(Discussing her tutor) Every week, when I'd say I did not get this, she would stay with me until I got it, would go and get me *extra* material, and go out of her way to see that I got it, that I learned it. Above and beyond. I can't put it into words without it sounding shallow.

P8 spoke about the ways his tutor showed support for him:

"She'd always talk with me. She was just someone I could talk with while working ...You don't get so bored when you're working on it.

He also mentioned support from his parents:

My parents were behind me. They said they were going to have a small party for me as soon as I got in. That helped out.

When P11 was asked how he felt supported by his tutor he responded:

I guess just the way she did things. When I went in there I felt like I probably couldn't do it anyways. She got me through that way of thinking, changed my whole attitude towards the classes, doing the study work. I thought I was just wasting my time.

P9 said that she had no outside support:

My support was mostly from myself, because I didn't tell my kids that I was doing it. They had no idea. It was just myself, my own push that made me do it. I had something that I had to prove to myself. Just because I didn't have that little point that they wanted me to have, I still could get.

My husband had a speech problem and he wanted to take the course. To encourage him, that's one reason why I went too. I thought, as long as he wants to do it (and he won't do it if he's alone), then I'll go too. I thought, heck, I just might as well get it. He didn't go back after the kids got married. I went back and he didn't know.

After considering other possible factors in part two of the interview questions, participants were brought back to the central question in part three. They were once more asked what they felt had the greatest impact on keeping them going until they reached their goals (see Appendix A, page 2, and Appendix B, page 3). Six people said

that their own determination to reach their goal was the primary force that spurred them on to completion. Two people mentioned their tutor(s). Two others talked about the importance of the goal (citizenship and going to college on schedule). Some gave secondary factors such as realizing that they “could” do it., improved self-esteem, wanting to pass classes, being met at home, the desire to learn and the goal of a B.A., children, wanting to improve in math, understanding more, and getting mad at math.

It’s interesting to note that only three of the ten participants altered slightly what they said in response to question number two after considering other possible variables in part two of the interview questions. In addition to no longer feeling “lost” in math, P3 said that wanting to pass her college math classes, improved self-esteem, and being met at home were also factors. P6, in response to question number one said it was her tutor and determination that kept her going but felt that determination was the overriding factor. When answering question number two she said it was primarily her tutor. Confronted again with trying to determine the major factor in the last question, she again mentioned both but felt it was determination that had more to do with it: “Determination...no ands, ifs, or buts.” P7 also had trouble isolating the one most important factor that kept her going. In question number one she said it was her children and her tutor. When asked to choose the most important variable she said it was her children. In responding to the last question, she said it was primarily her tutor but also mentioned the importance of her children and her desire to improve:

(Now that we’ve discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)?)

You and the knowledge that I could do it with your help. I don't want to pat you on the back too much to give you a fat head, but I couldn't have done it without you. I would still be in the same rut, because if any other tutor had come to me, I would have rejected that person, especially if it had been a male. You're very, very patient. You kind of had to be with me...

I wanted to feel pride in myself, and I couldn't with my lack of number knowledge and driving. I just couldn't feel completely good about myself. There were many

other areas that I was excelling in, but the stuff I didn't know brought me down too much. And made me feel inferior to other people.

They all factor in so much, it's hard to decipher which one is more important. You, my children, or my own desire. Because they're all right there together. If one of them had been gone, I think that would have affected the other factors. If I said it was you, I would be belittling my own feelings of wanting to conquer that mountain or I would be belittling my children's help. Which is so incredible. It doesn't compare, really, because your help was knowledge help as well as emotional, but theirs was love and emotional and pride. And it all went together nicely.

In the former students' eyes determination seemed to be the major driving force. P10 said it was his "determination and the will to go on." P11 stated that, "It was just me. I wanted to do it." P9 talked about her desire to accomplish it: "I set that goal for myself and I went to it." Inner will was also mentioned by P5:

It's my belief that in any act that someone does, that's what really counts. You couldn't rely on other people or some magical thing...It's you. You have to do it.

A couple of people interviewed offered parting comments. P11 ended his interview by stating: "That adult learning center down there is really great. I can't understand why more people don't take advantage of it." P7 concluded her interview with:

I'd just hope that this program continues for many years. And that the tutors that they have, that they respect those tutors, because we *need* them in the north country. There are many, many women out there that are in the same situation I'm in. That are with children, that need knowledge because knowledge is power. If we don't have power, how are we going to raise our children right? If we don't have tutors that don't have the hours and the support system that they need, the women of the Northeast Kingdom are going to be lacking, which means that their children are lacking. That's my view.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Summary

Analysis of the data has been separated into three broad areas: Things that the participants themselves mentioned as being the most crucial in their continuation in the ABE program until goal completion, impacting factors generated from the second part of

the interview questions, and common characteristics from the background information sheet which may or may not have any bearing on perseverance. These are categorized in each area as either internal or external variables. Things that could be affected by program decisions are noted in each area. Mention is also made of hindrances to goal attainment and possible things the program can impact to help reduce attrition.

The first area to be looked at encompasses things that the participants themselves listed as having the most impact on their continuation. These factors bear the most weight in this study. Six felt that it was their own determination. Two mentioned their tutor. Others variables are discussed below.

Some of the things the interviewees listed as having the greatest impact were inner (psychological) variables or external. Inner factors mentioned were: determination, the desire to learn, having a certain goal (B.A., citizenship, or college), realizing that they had the ability to accomplish their goals, improved self-esteem, and wanting children to be proud. External factors were the tutor and the influence of one's children.

The question arises as to which of these variables can be impacted by the program. Tutors can foster a sense of capability by showing their students that they can indeed do the work. This in turn helps to improve self-esteem which encourages continuation. How to affect determination is a question for future research.

The next area to be looked at includes factors that the majority of the participants agreed impacted their perseverance, but perhaps were not listed as "the most important thing." (from the second part of the interview questions) Internal variables were improved self-esteem (mentioned once again in this section), making progress, and the presence of support. External factors were flexible meeting times and convenient location of classes.

All five of these factors can possibly be impacted by the ABE program. Self-esteem can be enhanced by making progress and also through conversation. Tutors can help students make progress and realize that they are progressing. They can provide

support through encouragement and help with academics. Flexible meeting times and convenient location of classes can also be addressed programmatically.

The third area to be considered looked at common characteristics from the background information sheet that may or may not have any bearing on perseverance. Psychological variables were: having a stated goal (the majority mentioned getting a G.E.D.), lack of a learning disability diagnosis, not feeling that they learned differently from others, and lack of inspiration by subject materials. External things were: being met by one tutor and being met at home. Spending less than a year to complete their goals, staying in the program until completion, and taking less than a year from goal declaration to completion were mentioned but difficult to categorize. Having no medical problems as a child, and not requiring medication as either a child or ABE student were additional common characteristics.

Some of these things can perhaps be impacted by the program if indeed they contribute to continuation. The number of tutors working with a student and the location of lessons can be program decisions. Length of study can perhaps be influenced through encouragement. Lack of inspiration by program materials shows an area for program improvement.

Barriers to education, although not critical factors for this group of completers, nonetheless deserve to be given attention. Hindrances mentioned were problems with academics (math) and lack of confidence in ability. Tutors can play an instrumental role in these areas by helping students to master the concepts they are studying, thereby instilling confidence in ability to accomplish their goals.

Psychological factors that kept a student going if he/she thought of quitting were: determination, wanting a degree, and improved comprehension. External things were the tutor and one's children. (The latter could probably qualify as both). The tutor, as mentioned above, can be important as a source of support and aid in understanding of content.

One's own determination and their tutor were the overriding factors for perseverance in this group of ten ABE goal completers. The central question of how to influence determination remains.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations for practice are generated from the research and student comments made during the interviewing process.

- 1) Assessment of students should be gradual, ongoing, and conducted when warranted. (Jha, 1991) discussed the effects of testing on early attrition). Particular sensitivity needs to be given to the students' initial feelings of doubt in their ability to do the work. Extensive formal testing can reinforce lack of self-confidence. Assessment at appropriate intervals, however, can provide valuable feedback on progress for the students.
- 2) After initial assessment, students should be made aware of what areas they'll need to cover before reaching their goal (McKenzie, 1986). This plan of study should be reviewed periodically with the student to let them know how much they've progressed. (Perrin and Greenberg, 1994, discussed the importance of a student knowing how close he is to reaching his goal).
- 3) Teach them at least one new thing each time they are met (Oklahoma State Department of Education's 1989 Handbook for Adult Basic Education).
- 4) Combat lack of self-confidence through achievement (Dubois, 1989, mentions the importance of success in goal completion, as do the participants in this study). If assignments aren't complete, do some work with them to let them know that they can understand the material and are capable of doing it.
- 5) Try to enhance their self-esteem through conversation (Meyers, 1988, and Hathaway and Rhodes, 1979, talked about improved self-esteem as a factor in persistence. Interviewees mentioned conversations with their tutor and a Reach-Up

worker as having been instrumental in helping them believe in themselves). Let them know that they matter as people. Help them to believe that they are capable. Discuss different learning styles if that will help improve self-esteem.

6) Identify barriers to educational achievement and discuss ways to circumvent them. (The 1992 California State Department of Education statistics said that 28% of students reported a barrier to education).

7) Allow students flexibility in time and location of lessons. Let them be met at home if transportation, child care, or self-esteem issues would present barriers. (McKillop, 1991 discussed the importance of flexible scheduling. Jha, 1991, cited Mezirow et al., 1975, Moss and Richardson, 1967, and Cramer, 1982, as having talked about class scheduling. The Pennsylvania State Department of Education, 1986, reiterated the need for flexible scheduling and convenient location of classes to aid in retention of student).

8) Encourage students to meet their goals as soon as they can. (This particular study showed that most participants completed their goals in less than a year). If they talk about dropping out, try to find out why. Is there anything the program can do to help?

9) Allow one tutor primarily to work with each student. (Hathaway and Rhodes, 1979, said that individualized instruction offered the best chance of success. Smaller class sizes are more successful according to Boshier, 1973, and Wheaton, 1976, as cited in Jha, 1991).

10) If in a learning center setting, institute a mentor program whereby one tutor is responsible for monitoring each student's progress and consulting with him/her periodically. This eliminates communication problems among staff and redundancy of work with the student. Also, trust is established. The student will know that he has at least one person supporting his efforts to reach his goal. Network with other agencies to provide support for the student. (Dubois, 1989, listed lack of support as one of the major barriers to education. Jha, 1991, cited Arruz and Daniel, 1987, Jackson et al., 1987, and Wheaton, 1976 as stressing the need for individual counseling. She also cited Reder,

1985, as having mentioned the importance of one-to-one interaction. Supportive counseling was discussed by Mikulecky and D'Adamo-Weinstein, 1991, as well).

11) Ask the student how he feels about the materials he is using and change them if necessary. (Garrison, 1985, talked about course relevancy and participants in this study mentioned lack of particular interest in subjects). Try to make the content more inspiring. Find out what the student is interested in and find appropriate materials if possible. Couple a subject that the student really enjoys (such as writing) with one that he finds more frustrating.

12) Use GED pre-tests to show a student that he is ready to take the actual GED tests.(Interviewees found this helpful).

13) Consider having new students watch a video, listen to tapes, or read excerpts from goal completers in the ABE program as a means of support. If they realize that others had the same doubts upon entering, but persevered, it may encourage them also. (Jha, 1991, and Harmen, 1983, suggested an orientation for new students).

Implications for Further Research

Results from this study show that the participants felt that their own determination and their tutor were the primary factors in persevering until they reached their goals. Other factors such as improved self-esteem and making progress were also influential. Common characteristics, like time spent working on their goal, may or may not have had any bearing on continuation. Variables investigated in this study and the data gathered open up questions for further research.

All the participants had a stated goal upon entry into the program. Vocational goals beyond a GED were not well defined. For this particular group, absence of a particular vocational goal did not seem to hamper continuation until completion. The importance of a vocational goal beyond the stated educational goal could be explored in further research.

Also, the relationship between things that helped the student reach his/her goal and locus of control could be investigated. Five out of ten people mentioned their tutor as one of the things that kept them going, but only two out of ten considered it as having the most impact. Eight out of ten had support (seven mentioned family support and seven tutor support). The tutor's role or importance as a source of support could be looked at from the context of how important support is to someone with an internal locus of control.

Indeed, the entire issue of locus of control warrants further study. The three questions attempting to cover this in the interview instead gave information on self-determination in approaching tasks. Future studies can fine tune interview questions to indeed ascertain whether one attributes his success or failures to internal variables such as ability and effort or external forces such as luck and task difficulty.. Also, it would be interesting to determine if locus of control changes over time or through involvement or achievement in the program. Whether or not locus of control is static or situation dependent is another issue.

Self-esteem could be explored in further depth. What impacts or promotes development of self-esteem in students? One could try to determine if there was any correlation between locus of control and self-esteem. The relationship between feeling they were making progress and developing more self-esteem could be looked at. Amount of self-esteem and whether or not students felt they learned differently is another fertile area for exploration. (Nine had low self-esteem when they entered the program. Six didn't feel they learned differently from anyone else. Did they blame themselves for prior lack of academic achievement? And how does this tie in with feelings of determination? Can determination be both an asset and a handicap?)

Other possible interactions could be looked at. This study showed no pattern between parents' academic achievement level in school and their children's. This may not be true for all samples of population. There also seemed to be no relationship

between the time it took to complete one's goals and last grade completed in school. Students in this study had completed various years of formal education, yet all persevered until they reached their goals. The number of tutors one worked with and length of time spent on goals could be another area for future exploration. Also, whether or not unmarried completers had a support system is another area for investigation. All singles had a support system in this study. So many factors could influence goal completion that interactions need to be considered as well.

Lastly, since completers in this study attributed continuation to their own determination, the issue of determination needs to be studied. Are determination and desire to reach a goal the same thing? Words can be limiting and subject to interpretation. Is it possible to foster a sense of determination in students or is this an inherent quality unaffected by outside influence? What are the driving forces behind determination (unfinished business, future goals, etc.)

This study focused on students who had achieved their goals because they were determined to and most did it in under a year. What about those that come in and out of the program a number of times before they complete their goals? Perhaps that group needs to be studied separately. Do they lack determination? Is length of time spent in the program a predictor of goal completion? Can other variables be identified that perhaps would make them more determined or spur them on toward completion?

As stated at the beginning of this paper, 60% of all students entering an ABE program drop out before they reach their goals. Many spend quite a while working to achieve their goals. Watson, 1983, differentiates between retention and persistence. It is important that educators strive to encourage persistence until goals are reached and not just retain people in the program. Factors contributing to continuation need to be explored and promoted. Further research on those who drop out, particularly of a qualitative nature, would aid in understanding the problem of attrition and how to deal with it.

Limitations of Study

Data gathered from this study and results are valid only for this particular group of ten participants interviewed in the Northeast Kingdom of Vermont. Insights can be applied to groups of similar students and hopefully some of the recommendations will aid in greater retention of ABE students.

What has been recorded are the students' own words in response to the questions. But, words can be limiting. Also, the wording of the questions themselves perhaps could be interpreted differently by participants based on their own experiences. Interpretation of their answers occurred through the eyes and ears of one researcher.

A more general observation of the interviewing process is that the researcher's former students seemed to give more substance to the interviews. Perhaps this was due to having already established a relationship of trust with the researcher.

The researcher is greatly indebted to all the participants for their willing contribution to this study. They spoke from their hearts and souls and gave others a rare glimpse of their feelings as they pursued their goals. Not often do tutors have the opportunity to talk to former students once they've achieved their goals. Initial feelings about themselves upon entering the program were particularly revealing. People reading the words of those involved in this research should have the greatest respect for their accomplishments and the barriers they needed to overcome in order to succeed. Hopefully reaching their goals in the ABE program will be only the first of many successes.

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EDJE Index (through 12/94)

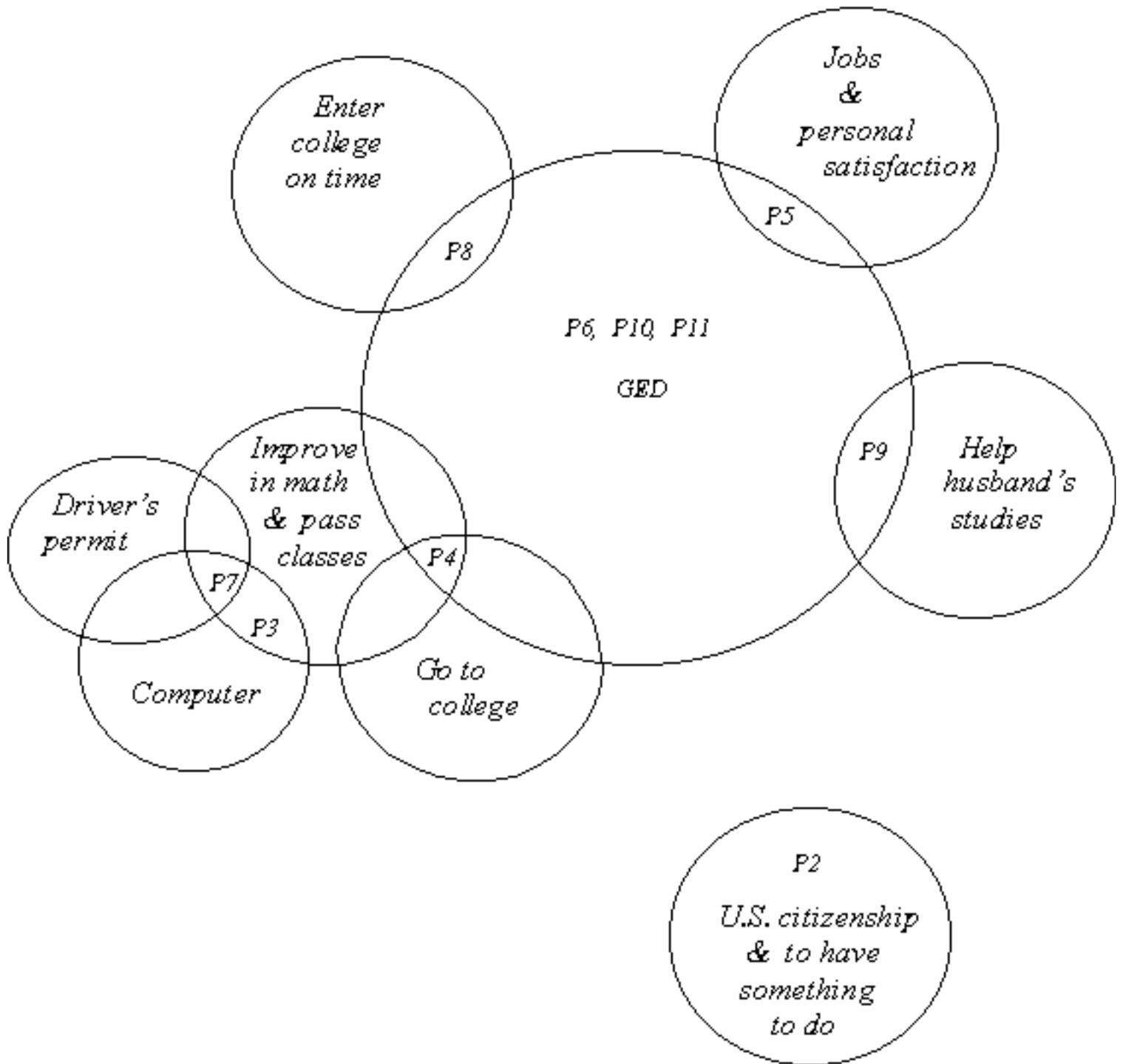
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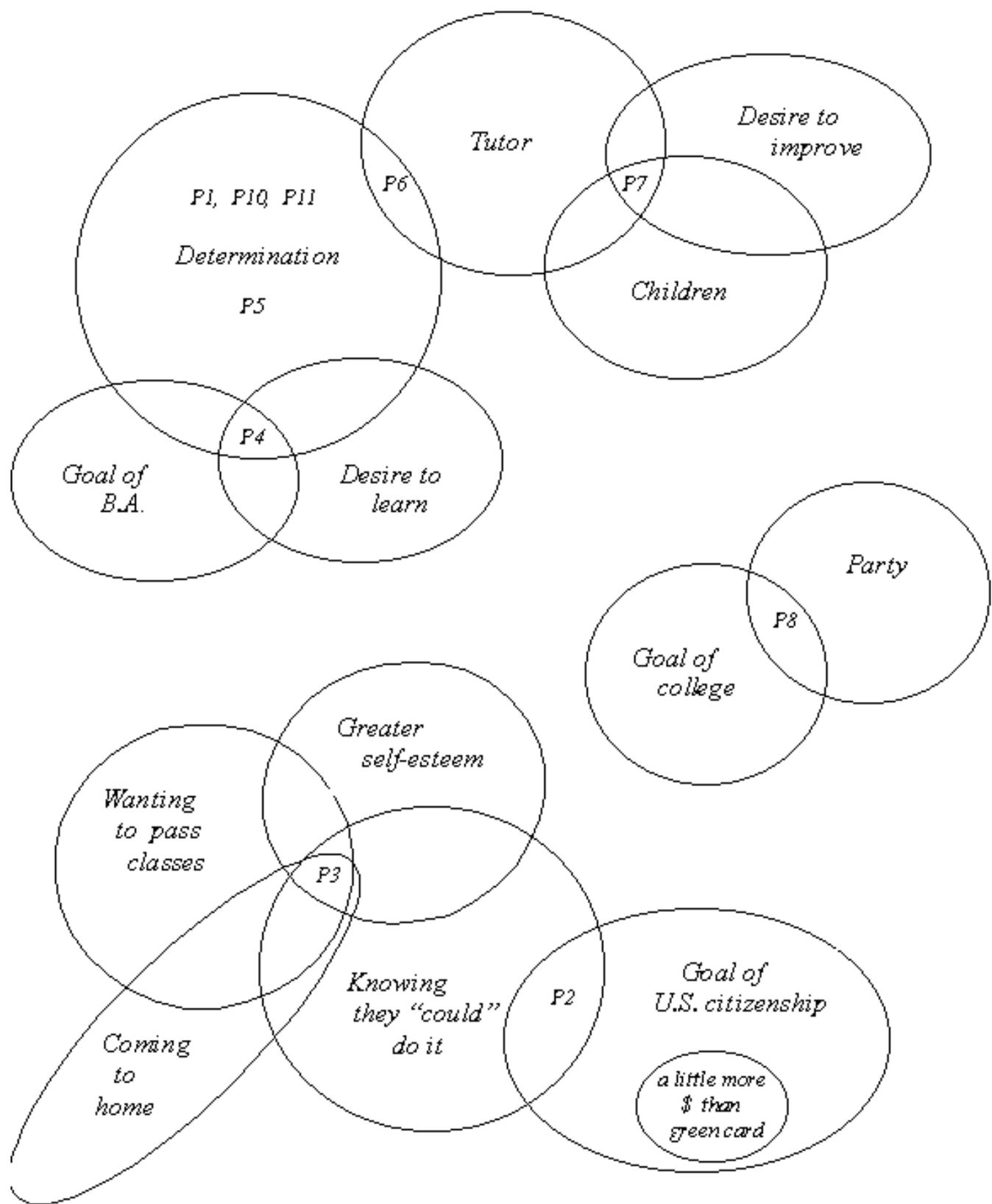
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Appendix A

Goals



Greatest Impact



Appendix B

Negative School Experiences

Felt kids picked on or made fun of them:	3
Couldn't get along with teachers:	3
Felt schools had too many rules; more concerned with discipline:	2
Had emotional problems, school experience affected by their attitude:	2
Didn't do well in math:	2
Missed graduation by one credit or less:	2
Couldn't afford to continue:	1
Disliked materials:	1
Hard to fit in with other kids:	1
Disliked other kids' disrespect for things:	1
Couldn't see well:	1
Ignored; not given extra help:	1
Poor grades; messed around:	1
Couldn't speak English in 1st grade:	1
Stayed back in 3rd and 4th grade:	1

Positive School Experiences

Liked/loved school:	2
"Special teachers":	2
Creative writing:	2
Reading / working with words:	1
Friends:	1
Learning basics:	1
Culinary class:	1

Responses to Question # 2:
“What helped you reach your goals?”

Determination:	6
Tutor(s):	5
Support from family and friends:	3
The goal:	3
Liked studying U.S. history:	1
Being met at home:	1
No longer feeling “lost” in math:	1
Practice with tutor right after college class:	1
Liked to study:	1
Wanting to stay on schedule for college:	1
Not wanting to return to high school and wishing to get on with life:	1
Good pre-test scores:	1

Responses to Question # 2:
Most Important Things

Determination:	4
Determination and tutor:	1
Tutor:	1
No longer feeling “lost” in math:	1
Children:	1
Desire to become a U.S. citizen and vote:	1
Wanting to stay on schedule for college:	1

Responses to Last Question: Greatest Impact

Determination only:	4
Determination primarily (and tutor):	1
Determination primarily (and desire to learn and goal of B.A.):	1
Tutor primarily (and children and desire to improve in math):	1
Wanting to be a U.S. citizen primarily (and realizing she “could” do it):	1
Improved self-esteem, wanting to pass classes, coming to the home and realizing she “could” do it:	1
Goal of college and promised party:	1

What Helped Continuation When Considered Quitting

Determination:	2 (also 1 who had quit two times)
(Determination and) Wanting her degree:	1
Tutor and children:	1
Tutor and improved math comprehension:	1
(One quit to help with sons’ weddings).	

Perceptions of Progress

Passing GED scores:	4
Better grades in college classes:	2
Increased understanding:	2
Quizzed on citizenship questions by husband:	1
Passing GED pre-test scores:	1
Feedback from tutor and doing it without cheating:	1
Could do the work after assignments and practice:	1
When there were only two questions left to go on the GED math test:	1

Sources of Support

Tutor:	7
Family:	7
(Family-- husband: 1, parents: 3, children: 2, family in general:	
1)	
Friends / housemates:	4
Reach-Up Program:	2
Reach-Up worker (Fern):	1

Methods of Support

From tutor

Encouragement:	2
Showed her she could do it:	1
Helped with math:	1
Stayed until she got it and brought extra materials:	1
Kept him interested, talked to him, and informed him of testing dates:	1
Changed his attitude toward the classes and doing the study work:	1

From Friends

Encouragement:	2
Went over material and reviewed:	1

From Family

Husband—quizzed her on citizenship questions:	1
Parents—encouragement: (One student's parents said they'd have a party for him when he got his GED)	2
Mother--watched her children whenever it was needed:	1
Children—encouragement: (One's children: asked her what she had learned, said she wasn't dumb, were proud of her)	2

Reach-Up Program

Paid for child care, transportation, and classes:	2
Reach-Up worker (Fern)--Conversation with her gave her determination:	1

Appendix C

Initial Contact

“Would you be willing to help an ABE person who is doing a master’s project about adult education?”

Confidentiality Agreement

I, _____, agree that the purposes of this research project have been explained to me. I agree that all my questions have been answered. Furthermore, I state that I have chosen freely to participate in this interview in order to help the researcher determine what factors help ABE students complete their goals.

I understand that anonymity is guaranteed. The interview will be taped, my answers and comments transcribed to written form, and no mention made either orally or in writing of my actual name. If it is necessary to quote a part of what I will say, a name will be invented to conceal my identity.

First I will answer a few questions regarding demographics (age, etc.), then proceed with the rest of the interview. In order to make the first part of the interview shorter, I give permission for the researcher to obtain some of the information (such as length of study in the program) from my file.

Furthermore, I understand that I don't have to answer any questions that I don't feel comfortable responding to. I can withdraw from the interview at any point if I want. Once the research is completed, if I wish to see a summary of the results, one will be sent to me.

I understand that the researcher is most interested in my own responses and perceptions and any unique insights I may have to offer.

Participant _____

Date _____

Interviewer _____

Date _____

Appendix D

(Trial Run)

Participant # _____

Background Information

Are you female _____ or male _____? Married _____ or single? _____

What is your current age? _____ How old were you when you joined ABE? _____

What was your age when you completed your goals? _____

Did you leave the program before completing your goals and then come back? _____

If yes, how long did you work on it the first time? _____

How much time passed before you came back again? _____

How long did you work on it the second time? _____

How much time passed before you reentered the program? _____

Were there more times that you left the program and came back again? _____

If so, how many times? _____ and for how many years? _____

Were you raising a family as you pursued your goals? _____

Were you married or single as you worked on your goals? _____

Were you working outside the home while you studied? _____

In what towns did you pursue your studies? _____

How many tutors did you work with? _____

What grade did you complete in school? _____

What grade did your father complete? _____ your mother? _____

Did you have a prior negative school experience? _____

Were you diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school or did you feel that you learned differently than the other kids? _____

Did you have any medical problems as a child? _____

_____ eyesight _____ hearing _____ sinus

Did you require medication as a child? _____

Did you require medication while you were working on your goals with ABE? _____

Do you consider yourself more of an individual determined to set your own course or
a follower? _____

(Trial Run)

Interview

A number of reasons have been proposed as to why some ABE students complete their goals while others leave before the program before they achieve their goals. Much research has been conducted on reasons for dropping out, but seldom has the opportunity been given to those who have actually completed their goals to say in their own words what helped them to persevere. That is the purpose of this research--to hear from you what you feel had the most impact.

Please take a few minutes to supply the background information before proceeding with the rest of the interview.

1) What factors do you feel were the most significant in helping you to achieve your goals?

2) What factors hindered your efforts to reach your goals?

family problems: _____ children? _____ husband? _____ moving?
 _____ job? _____ finances? _____ transportation?
 _____ alcohol/drugs?
 _____ self-esteem? _____ confidence in your ability?

3) What role, if any, did your goal(s) in joining the program have in keeping you going?

(a) Did you have clear educational goals when you joined?

(b) Were your educational goals tied to vocational goals?

4) Did your ability to feel progress motivate you to keep going?

--What helped you to feel that you were making progress?

5) Was interest in the subject material a factor in helping you to continue?

--Did you feel that the material was relevant to your life or future goals?

Page 2

6) Did the flexibility of the program have any bearing on helping you to continue?

--Flexibility of: ____ time? ____ location? ____ materials?

7) What influence did your level of self-esteem have on your willingness to continue?

(a) How was your view of yourself when you entered the program?

(b) Did it improve as you made progress?

8) Who supported you in your effort to reach your goals?

____ family? ____ tutor? ____ other?

--How did that person support you?

____ trust? ____ patience? ____ encouragement? ____ friendly?

____ interested in you as a person? ____ the relationship/interaction?

Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)?

Background Information

(Trial Run)

Int: Are you female or male?

P1: Female.

Int: Married or single?

P1: Married.

Int: What is your current age?

P1: Old enough so I don't have to say.

[From records—

Current age: 52]

Int: How old were you when you joined ABE?

P1: 79 or 80 (just kidding).

[From records—

First enrolled: 1979 or 1980

At age: 36 or 37]

Int: What was your age when you completed your goals?

P1: In 1994.

[From records—

Got GED at age: 48 on 8/18/92

Completed computer and writing goals at age: 51 on 10/31/95]

Int: Did you leave the program before completing your goals and then come back?

P1: No.

[From records—

Enrollments: 1979 or 1980

1987

11/22/91]

Int: At some point you left the program and then returned?

P1: At some points inactive.

Int: If yes, how long did you work on it the first time?

P1: No, I don't remember.

Int: How much time passed before you came back again?

P1: [unintell.]

Int: Were you raising a family as you pursued your goals?

P1: Yes.

Int: Were you married or single as you worked on your goals?

P1: First time, divorced.

Int: You're presently married?

P1: Yes.

Int: Were you working outside the home while you studied?

P1: Part-time.

Int: In what towns did you pursue your studies?

P1: Barton, mostly, right? Northeast Kingdom?

Int: How many tutors did you work with?

P1: Four.

Int: What grade did you complete in school?

P1: 11th.

Int: What grade did your father complete?

Int: —your mother?

P1: Don't know.

Int: Did you have a prior negative school experience?

P1: No. Loved school.

Int: Were you diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school or did you feel that you learned differently than the other kids?

P1: No.

Int: Did you have any medical problems as a child? Eyesight, hearing, sinus?

P1: Hearing.

Int: Did you require medication as a child?

P1: That I don't know.

Int: Did you require medication while you were working on your goals with ABE?

P1: I'm on medication now.

Int: That was because you had a stroke?

P1: And heart trouble.

Int: Do you consider yourself more of an individual determined to set your own course or a follower? (Do you have an easier time if someone gives you an assignment and says do so many pages by such and such, or just do what feels comfortable for you, determine your own speed?)

P1: If I think I can do it, I'd go ahead and do it. I do both, really.

Int: You don't lean strongly in either direction?

P1: No.

~~~~~  
~~~~~  
Interview

1) *What factors do you feel were the most significant in helping you to achieve your goals?*

P1: My tutor. She's the one that made me think I could do it and get it, and I did.

Int: Helped you believe that you could accomplish it.

P1: Yes.

2) *What factors hindered your efforts to reach your goals?*

[Possibilities offered were:

family problems: _____ children? _____ husband? _____ moving? _____ job?

____ finances? ____ transportation? ____ alcohol/drugs?
____ self-esteem? ____ confidence in your ability?]

P1: I considered dropping out because of the tutor I had at the time.

Int: Was there anything else that made you think you didn't want to keep going?

P1: It was only the tutor.

Int: That wasn't your present tutor?

P1: No

3) *What role, if any, did your goal(s) in joining the program have in keeping you going?*

(a) Did you have clear educational goals when you joined?

(b) Were your educational goals tied to vocational goals?

P1: That one... I don't understand what you mean.

Int: When you first came into the program, did you have clear educational goals? Like a certain goal that you wanted to reach?

P1: The first time, I wanted to get my GED. I finally did.

Int: Your initial goal was to get your GED?

P1: Uh-huh.

Int: Was that goal tied to vocational goals? Was there something you might want beyond that?

P1: I did want to go to college afterwards, but not the first time. The last time.

Int: Do you feel that having that as a goal, getting your GED and perhaps going to college was something that kept you working towards it even when you got tired of doing the work?

P1: That's right.

4) *Did your ability to feel progress motivate you to keep going?*

P1: To feel progress?

Int: When you started to feel like you were making progress or seeing that you were

taking steps towards reaching your goal, did that give you motivation to keep going?

P1: Yes.

Int: —What helped you to feel that you were making progress?

P1: I wasn't making any progress until my last tutor. She just gave me the belief in myself that I could do it.

Int: In terms of measuring your progress by completing the assignments and getting them right, perhaps?

P1: Yes.

Int: And actually passing the GED test?

P1: Yes.

Int: As you saw yourself passing tests, that kept you going till you got done?

P1: Yes.

5) *Was interest in the subject material a factor in helping you to continue?*

P1: Not really, because I just wanted to get my GED at the time.

Int: —Did you feel that the material was relevant to your life or future goals? Or, just helping to get the GED?

P1: Just helping get the GED.

Int: The subjects in and of themselves weren't particularly interesting?

P1: No, I already did them in school anyway.

6) *Did the flexibility of the program have any bearing on helping you to continue?*

[Possibilities offered were:

—Flexibility of: ____ time? ____ location? ____ materials?]

(In other words, the flexibility of time with someone coming to your house as opposed to having to go somewhere?)

P1: Oh, yeah. That was good. I liked that part.

Int: Materials, in that if you didn't like something, you could have it changed?

P1: Yeah.

Int: Did you feel any of that had a bearing on keeping you going? If it had been more inflexible, if you had to get yourself to a class like at CCV . . . ?

P1: I wouldn't have been able to do it.

7) *What influence did your level of self-esteem have on your willingness to continue?*

P1: I don't believe I understand that.

Int: Some people, when they first start in the program, one reason that they drop out is because they have low self-esteem where they don't believe that they can do it. Sometimes, as they continue, their self-esteem increases as they see themselves making progress. Do you think that had any influence at all? Here are the follow-up questions:

(a) How was your view of yourself when you entered the program? Did you feel good about yourself. that you could accomplish this, or was it kind of iffy?

P1: Probably kind of iffy.

Int: So you felt that you would try but you weren't quite sure if you'd go all the way with it?

P1: Right.

Int: (b) Did it improve as you made progress?

P1: Yes.

Int: That had some bearing on keeping you going?

Int: I believe it did.

8) *Who supported you in your effort to reach your goals?*

[Possibilities offered were:

_____ family? _____ tutor? _____ other?

—How did that person support you?

_____ trust? _____ patience? _____ encouragement? _____ friendly?

____ interested in you as a person? ____ the relationship/interaction?]

P1: My tutor and my husband. You can tell I like my tutor!

Int: In what ways did those people support you?

P1: Just be there and let me know that I could do it.

Int: Helped you believe you could do it? Maybe we could explore those a little more. What were some of the ways you felt encouraged?

P1: Neither my tutor nor my husband put me down, they just kept telling me I could do it.

Int: Do your feel your relationship with your husband and your tutor being supportive was a factor in keeping you going?

P1: Yeah. Positive [unintell.]

Int: Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)?

P1: My tutor.

Int: Is there anything else that you want to say about that? In what ways did your tutor support you? Just helping you believe that you could do it?

oP1: Yeah. She wasn't the kind to put you down. Nice tutor. [unintell.]

Int: Anything else you'd like to say in terms of what kept you going?

P1: No. Just my tutor. I'm proud of her. She did a darn good job!

Appendix E

Participant #

Background Information

(As much as possible will be obtained from the ABE file)

Are you female _____ or male _____? Married _____ or single? _____

What is your current age? _____ How old were you when you joined ABE? _____

What was your age when you completed your goals? _____

Did you leave the program before completing your goals and then come back? _____

If yes, how long did you work on it the first time? _____

When did you come back again? _____

How long did you work on it the second time? _____

When did you reenter the program again? _____

Were there more times that you left the program and came back again? _____

Were you raising a family as you pursued your goals? _____

Were you married or single as you worked on your goals? _____

Were you working outside the home while you studied? _____

Were the places you studied rural or urban? _____

--At home or in a learning center? _____

How many tutors did you work with? _____

What grade did you complete in school? _____

What grade did your father complete? _____ your mother? _____

Did you have a prior negative school experience? _____

Did you have a prior positive school experience? _____

Were you diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school or did you feel that you learned differently than the other kids? _____

Did you have any medical problems as a child? _____
_____ eyesight _____ hearing _____ sinus

Did you require medication as a child? _____

Did you require medication while you were working on your goals with ABE? _____

Do you consider yourself more of an individual determined to set your own course or a follower? _____

--Would you rather determine for yourself how to approach a task or be given guidance/assignments to show you how to carry it out? _____

--Did you want your tutor to assign a set amount of work for you to do or determine for yourself what you could handle? _____

Interview

(Interviewer Sheet)

A number of reasons have been proposed as to why some ABE students complete their goals while others leave the program before they achieve their goals. Research has been conducted on reasons for dropping out of similar programs, but seldom has the opportunity been given to those who have actually completed their goals to say in their own words what helped them to succeed. That is the purpose of this research--to hear from you what you feel contributed the most to you reaching your program goals..

Please take a few minutes to supply the background information before proceeding with the rest of the interview.

1) What were your goals in joining the program?

-- What helped you reach your goals?

2) What were the things that were most important in helping you to achieve your goals?

3) Did you ever think of quitting?

What kept you going?

4) What things hindered your efforts to reach your goals?

(Note: family problems: _____ children? _____ husband? _____ moving?
 _____ job? _____ finances? _____ transportation? _____ alcohol/drugs?
 _____ self-esteem? _____ confidence in your ability?)

Research has explored some things that may or may not help a person to continue in the program until they reach their goals. Would you take a minute to think about the next six questions and decide for yourself whether or not they had any influence in keeping you going?

- 5) Once you saw you could make progress, did that keep you going?
 --What helped you to feel that you were making progress?
- 6) Did any of the things you were studying make you want to continue?
 --What were those things?
 --Why were they important to you?
- 7) What part of how the program works helped you the most--flexible time, location, materials, other?
- 8) What influence did your self-esteem have on your being able to continue?
 (a) What was your view of yourself when you entered the program?
 (b) Did it change while you were in the program?
 --If yes, how?
- 9) Did you have any support to reach your goals while you were in the program?
 --If so, who or what? (Note: ___ family? ___ tutor? ___ agency? ___ other?)
 --If a person, how did he/she show support for you?
 (Note: ___ trust? ___ patience? ___ encouragement? ___ friendliness?
 ___ interest in you as a person? ___ the relationship/interaction?
 ___ helping with some of your other responsibilities? ___ in other ways?)
 --Do you want to say more about that?

Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)?

Interview

(Participant sheet)

A number of reasons have been proposed as to why some ABE students complete their goals while others leave the program before they achieve their goals. Research has been conducted on reasons for dropping out of similar programs, but seldom has the opportunity been given to those who have actually completed their goals to say in their own words what helped them to succeed. That is the purpose of this research--to hear from you what you feel contributed the most to you reaching your program goals.

Please take a few minutes to supply the background information before proceeding with the rest of the interview.

- 1) What were your goals in joining the program?
-- What helped you reach your goals?
- 2) What were the things that were most important in helping you to achieve your goals?
- 3) Did you ever think of quitting?
What kept you going?
- 4) What things hindered your efforts to reach your goals?

Research has explored some things that may or may not help a person to continue in the program until they reach their goals. Would you take a minute to think about the next six questions and decide for yourself whether or not they had any influence in keeping you going?

- 5) Once you saw you could make progress, did that keep you going?
--What helped you to feel that you were making progress?

- 6) Did any of the things you were studying make you want to continue?
--What were those things?
--Why were they important to you?

- 7) What part of how the program works helped you the most--flexible time, location, materials, other?

- 8) What influence did your self-esteem have on your being able to continue?
 - (a) What was your view of yourself when you entered the program?
 - (b) Did it change while you were in the program?
--If yes, how?

- 9) Did you have any support to reach your goals while you were in the program?
 - If so, who or what?
 - If a person, how did he/she show support for you?
 - Do you want to say more about that?

Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)?

Background Information

Int: Are you female or male?

P2: Female.

Int: Married or single?

P2: Married.

Int: What is your current age?

P2: 63, almost 64.

Int: Almost 64?

P2: Yes.

Int: How old were you when you joined ABE? If you don't remember I can get that from your file.

P2: I was 62.

[From records—

First time entry age: 58]

Int: What was your age when you completed your goals?

P2: 62.

[From records—

Age when received citizenship: 61]

Int: Did you leave the program before completing your goals and then come back?

P2: No.

[From records—

Enrollments: 2/4/91–9/91 (left for health problems)

5/13/92–9.7.93 (ready for citizenship tests; no money)

Got citizenship: 10/94

Exited: 10/31/94]

Int: Were you raising a family as you pursued your goals?

P2: No. All grown up.

Int: Were you married or single as you worked on your goals?

P2: Married.

Int: Were you working outside the home while you studied?

P2: No.

Int: Were the places you studied rural or urban?

P2: Rural.

Int: —At home or in a learning center?

P2: At home.

Int: How many tutors did you work with?

P2: One.

Int: What grade did you complete in school?

P2: 7th.

Int: What grade did your father complete?

P2: Don't know.

Int: —your mother?

P2: 6.

Int: Did you have a prior negative school experience?

P2: I liked school. My reason for not going to school was a matter of having to pay to go outside the town to go further, and also I needed to earn my own, because my folks just didn't have the money to provide for me. Food and shelter, yes; clothing, no.

Int: So you needed to leave to make some money.

Did you have a prior positive school experience?

P2: Yeah, I liked school. We had to go about 18 miles, at the [unintell.] and drive back and forth and needed to pay. I just couldn't do it. We had the local school

but we didn't have all the grades. If you wanted to go on, you had to pay to go to [unintell.] and pay rent for boarding.

Int: That was Canada. right?

P2: Uh-huh. Now, I guess, it's free as long as you want to go, but we didn't back then.

Int: So up through seventh, it was free and then after that if you wanted to go on . . .

P2: Well, it was free, but you still had to buy some books. Like over here you get all your books, right? Over there, if you had a book you were going to write in, you had to pay for it. You had to buy your own books anyway. Only the school was fortunate enough that some people, when they finished with their books, they left them. [unintell.] Most of the books you had to buy.

Int: It's a lot different now, I bet.

P2: And also, if the reading books changed, if you didn't buy them, you'd pass them around.

Int: So it seems that the kids were at a disadvantage, according to income? Not everyone had the same educational opportunities.

P2: No, they didn't.

Int: But in general, you had a positive experience with school?

P2: Yeah.

Int: Were you diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school or did you feel that you learned differently than the other kids?

P2: No. Of course, back then, we didn't have certain groups of children, anyway. You either learned or you didn't learn.

Int: Did you have any medical problems as a child? Eyesight, hearing, sinus . . . ?

P2: Well, not really. [unintell.] Scarlet Fever, sometimes.

Int: Would that keep you out of school for a period of time?

P2: No. [unintell.] I used to go up and take my test, when there wasn't anyone there. I

had a rash. Everyone after came down with whatever it was, I probably did [come down with Scarlet Fever.] But I didn't want to miss those tests!

Int: Did you require medication as a child?

P2: No. I did have some sort of asthma [unintell.] My girl friend talks about it now: I was overweight and I couldn't run around in the summertime and so on. I didn't have any treatment for it.

Int: Did you require medication while you were working on your goals with ABE?

P2: No. Well, I needed oxygen.

Int: That was for your asthma, right?

P2: Yeah. And other medication, I have heart medicine and [unintell.]

Int: Do you think that had any influence on your ability to concentrate or anything like that?

P2: Well, the oxygen thing, it does affect attention and your thinking ability. It makes your head feel like [unintell.] (boozing?). It's like it's drawing water on my brain.

Int: So when you're taking oxygen, like right now, you couldn't think quite as clearly as you could if you weren't taking it?

P2: It's harder. The nurse blames it onto my TV, but I don't think it's my TV. I find it harder—you probably noticed it—to visit. I have to really concentrate on what people are saying. I don't know.

Int: You mentioned your TV. I'm curious.

P2: She thinks I watch too much TV. That's why, she says, I can't remember names. Because you're not supposed to not be remembering names until you get to seventy.

Int: Do you consider yourself more of an individual determined to set your own course or a follower?

P2: I like to do for myself, but I'm not so sure . . . If I didn't have Frank, I don't know. I'd be lost without him.

Int: So you see yourself as a follower, over all?

P2: Yeah.

Int: —Would you rather determine for yourself how to approach a task or be given guidance/assignments to show you how to carry it out?

P2: That depends on what the task is. I don't know quite how to answer that.

Int: —Did you want your tutor to assign a set amount of work for you to do or determine for yourself what you could handle?

P2: I like to determine it myself. One week I might feel like doing a lot, another week I might not.

Int: Some people like to have everything very rigid and defined. They want their tutor to say, "I want you to do five pages by next week." Then they have that as a deadline and a goal. Other people, if you try to impose a deadline or goal on them, then they balk at it, because they'd rather be free to do something if they felt like it. There's a lot of different types of learners, but those are a couple of differences that we notice among learners.

P2: You talking about schoolwork here. If I was talking about regular work, I don't like a list, because if you gave me a list a mile long, I'd break my neck trying to get it all done. Like when I did the housework. They'd bring me a list and say, do what you have time to do. I'd always pick the extras first, then I'd have to have time to do the regulars. That's what did me in.

Int: So you'd try to get as much done on the list as possible. whatever they asked you to do.

P2: They'd add some extras and say, "If you have time." I had a terrible time with that, because I'd do the extras first, then I'd *have* to find time to do the rest. And I'd work right out straight. I'm not good with lists. I might be on schoolwork, but I certainly wasn't on regular work.

Int: Because you felt required to do all of it.

P2: That's right. So I did it twice. I earned twice what I got.

Int: That's when you were doing housework.

P2: Yeah. Schoolwork? I'd like to do extra if I had the time, depending on the subject.

Int: When we did it, it was pretty open-ended, however much time we had to get to it, you seemed to feel comfortable with that.

P2: The thing is, I hate English. I realize we have to have it, but don't like it. I still don't write a letter right. That's a family problem. Everyone of us hates English. Arnold and my husband and I.

Int: You did very well with your citizenship, though.

P2: It's the writing of it. The punctuation marks get me.

Int: Let's clarify this question a little more: —Would you rather determine for yourself how to approach a task . . . Maybe we can think of a more open-ended example. Say you get something in the mail that you need to put together. Would you rather sit down and figure it out for yourself or have your husband tell you, first you do this and then you do that. Somebody giving you more guidance to do it.

P2: I have to confess, in late years, my husband . . . everything that comes in he tends for me. Partly because of my shakiness and partly because of my eyes.

Int: With cooking, do you follow a recipe strictly?

P2: No. I don't follow. My daughter-in-law used to say I was a dump-and-pour cook. If I was going to make biscuits, I'd dump some flour in a bowl and go to it. She said, "You're a good cook, Mom, but nothing's ever twice the same." Dump-and-pour. Put some flour in there, I might measure it. Throw in some shortening and oil, throw in some nuts, stir it up, roll it out.

Int: —Would you rather determine for yourself how to approach a task or be given guidance/assignments to show you how to carry it out? I guess it depends on what the task is. Some things you'd like to do yourself, and other things . . .

P2: Some things, I'd rather do myself. It's easier. Now, if I could do my own work

now, it's easier for me to do my own work than to sit here and ask you to do this or do that. I hate giving orders [unintell.]

Int: But what about someone giving you orders as opposed to having you figure it out for yourself?

P2: If I'm working with somebody, that doesn't bother me. If Frank says, "I think you should do it like this, you should do it like that," which he did once, I told him, "Why don't you get out of the kitchen and go sit down?" I don't like somebody to tell me how to do things just because they're bored. If I'm getting paid, fine.

Int: If you can figure it out for yourself . . . ?

P2: Leave me alone, yeah!

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Interview

1) *What were your goals in joining the program?*

P2: I don't seem to remember why I joined to begin with. Unless it was just to have something to do.

Int: The last time, it was to get you through your citizenship?

P2: But what was [unintell.], do you remember?

Int: The last time it was specifically to get you through your citizenship.

P2: That's right. It might have been just to have something to do, too.

Int: And you said you saw our ad on TV.

P2: Yes. Put that in, because a person can't remember.

Int: And the second time around, it was specifically to get your citizenship?

P2: Yes, it was to get my citizenship.

Int: — What helped you reach your goals?

P2: I feel my teacher helped me.

Int: Anything else?

P2: One thing, I loved the history part of it. So that was no problem.

Int: U.S. History?

P2: Uh-huh.

2) *What were the things that were most important in helping you to achieve your goals?*

If you had a number of things you might have stated in the first question, out of those, what do you feel was most important in keeping you going until you actually got your citizenship?

P2: I think I really wanted to become a citizen. It was a choice of either renewing my visa card or becoming a citizen. For just a few dollars more, I could become a citizen. I always wanted to become a citizen. I wanted to be able to vote. I think that was one of the most important things after all these years, that I'm going to be able to vote. That means a lot to me. In the end, that was probably the biggest reason that kept me going. I been here forty years and I couldn't vote.

The reason I hadn't got my papers before, they used to teach it but you had to go to Union High School. I didn't have the transportation. It's when they started sending you around to the homes that I had the opportunity to learn.

Int: So if we weren't able to come to the homes . . . ?

P2: I wouldn't have been able to get there. I couldn't drive. It was only in the evening they gave it. So I couldn't enter. I'm not entitled to drive.

3) *Did you ever think of quitting?*

P2: No.

Int: What kept you going? I think you stated what you felt was your motivator.

P2: My determined nature.

Int: You were determined?

P2: Yes, I was determined.

4) *What things hindered your efforts to reach your goals?*

P2: [unintell.]

Int: You did mention transportation?

P2: Yes, that did.

Int: If it wasn't for someone coming to your house?

P2: I couldn't have gotten transportation or someone to stay with the children. Frank could have brought me, but who would have stayed with the kids?

Int: You don't think there was any other factor, no one giving you a hard time about wanting to do it?

P2: No.

Int: Nothing else really stopped you from wanting to achieve it? OK.

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5) *Once you saw you could make progress, did that keep you going?*

P2: Oh, sure.

*Int: It did? So when you saw that you could learn, that kept you going?*

P2: Yes. That motivated me.

*Int: Some people come into our program thinking they can't learn, and when they realize that they can . . . but this may or may not have been a factor in your case.*

P2: No, when I put my mind to it . . .

*Int: And when you saw that you were remembering, it kept you going? OK.*

*What helped you to feel that you were making progress? How did you know you were making progress?*

P2: Frank asked me the questions. He'd ask me ten out of the hundred questions.

*Int: Mixed questions?*

P2: Mix them up and down and every which way. So I knew that I could do it, but I

was still nervous.

*Int: And you saw that you knew the answers to them.*

P2: Uh-huh.

6) *Did any of the things you were studying make you want to continue?*

P2: Yes, I always wanted to [unintell.] Especially American history. I never had American history. I had American geography. I don't care where anything is. But I do love the history. Can't read a map *today* . . .

*Int: . . . but you know the history of it.*

*—Why were they important to you?*

P2: Well, I lived in the United States. Also, I just love history. The only history I hate is British history because of all those kings.

7) *What part of how the program works helped you the most—flexible time, location, materials, other?*

P2: Flexible time and being able to come to the home. There was a real good teacher.

8) *What influence did your self-esteem have on your being able to continue. If that question isn't quite clear, we can do the two follow-ups first.*

*(a) What was your view of yourself when you entered the program?*

P2: I'm not one to have a high self-esteem. I think this greatly enhanced that. I think it's very good for that.

*Int: Getting your citizenship made you feel better about yourself?*

P2: Uh-huh.

*Int: So you feel that when you entered the program, your view of yourself was different than when you started the program?*

P2: Oh, yes! Because having had two nervous breakdowns [unintell.] I could function enough to learn. When I came out of [unintell.] I couldn't remember faces or names or anything or follow a program on TV, so this was fantastic to be able to

learn like that after, I knew it had been years.

*Int: It made you realize that you could.*

P2: Uh-huh.

*Int: To get back to the first part of the question, what influence did your self-esteem have on your being able to continue, as you were feeling better about yourself, do you feel that had anything with keeping you going?*

P2: Yes.

*Int: Maybe it was or maybe it wasn't?*

P2: I think it did.

*Int: When you saw that you could learn?*

P2: Yes. Because, when I came home, I can remember laying on the couch and watching that TV and forcing myself to watch "As the World Turns," because I could not follow a TV program. Even though it was quite a few years later, to be able to sit there and to learn, it really has been a great help. I'm somewhere near normal.

*Int: Great! And you feel better about yourself.*

P2: Oh, yes!

9) *Did you have any support to reach your goals while you were in the program?*

P2: Oh, yes. My friends, and from Frank.

*Int: Your husband.*

P2: Yes.

*Int: So people were supportive of you.*

P2: Yes. [unintell.]

*Int: Can you think of anyone else that gave you support?*

P2: My girl friend [unintell.]

*Int: So friends and family?*

P2: Yeah. And the children, they encouraged me.

*—If a person, how did he/she show support for you? What did they do that showed you they were supportive?*

P2: Frank used to sit here and go all over those questions with me. And you certainly used to stop and encourage me.

*Int: Pick on you.*

P2: Pick on me, yes. [unintell.] , remember that? Remember when you went up to Customs? What was it you went up to get?

*Int: The forms that you needed, and to try to talk them into coming to your house to ask you questions.*

P2: Yes.

*Int: Your husband showed support by asking you the questions, taking the time to do it. How did your kids show that they supported you?*

P2: Well, they were just glad I was doing it. They didn't do much to help because they weren't here. But it's kind of like Chief Beetle said, "I don't know why you're shaking so, I'm going to ask you ten questions. A lot of you, you just knew by being here." Which is true. [unintell.] But I do remember how I used to get mixed up on the cabinet. I don't think I know it now! But Frank says, "I been here all my life, you still got me beat. I still don't know it."

*Int: A lot of kids graduate from high school and they don't remember that stuff.*

P2: [unintell.]

*Int: So you feel that you had support from your husband, from friends, and you mentioned your teacher. OK.*

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*Int: Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)?*

P2: Once I knew that I could . . . I needed my card anyway. Probably another thing, not the most important thing, was I was able to get that citizenship for only \$10 or \$15 more than that card would cost me, and frankly I was tired of having to get it again and again and again.

*Int: What, like every four years or something?*

P2: I'm not sure. When all I had to do was give up Canadian citizenship . . . A lot of people don't like to give that up, because if they were over there when they were 38, they can draw the old age assistance from Canada. Not a whole lot. But I wouldn't [unintell.]

*Int: Weren't you allowed to keep dual citizenship?*

P2: No. I thought they did but they didn't.

*Int: Are you sure?*

P2: I know Burt said I had to give it up. That's because I came over so young. I came over at [unintell.] So far as a pension, I wouldn't have got it anyway. I would only have got it something like six months.

*Int: That might be something worth checking into. We were told you can keep both now. You can maintain your Canadian plus get your American.*

P2: They told me I didn't have both. Maybe it was Canadian Customs that told me that. I can't remember!

*Int: You've answered all the questions. To get back to the first one, you feel that it was your desire to become a citizen and be able to vote.*

P2: Yes.

*Int: That was the major thing that kept you going.*

P2: Yes.

Background Information

*Int: Are you female or male?*

P3: Female.

*Int: Married or single?*

P3: Single.

*Int: What is your current age?*

P3: 35.

*Int: How old were you when you joined ABE?*

P3: No. I don't know.

[From records—

*First time entry age: 34]*

*Int: What was your age when you completed your goals?*

P3: 35.

*Int: Did you leave the program before completing your goals and then come back?*

P3: No.

*Int: Were you raising a family as you pursued your goals?*

P3: Yes.

*Int: Were you married or single as you worked on your goals?*

P3: Single.

*Int: Were you working outside the home while you studied?*

P3: No.

*Int: Were the places you studied rural or urban?*

P3: Rural.

*Int: —At home or in a learning center?*

P3: At home.

*Int: How many tutors did you work with?*

P3: One.

*Int: What grade did you complete in school?*

P3: 12.

*Int: And now you're in Community College?*

P3: Uh-huh.

*Int: What grade did your father complete?*

P3: Sixth Grade.

*Int: —your mother?*

P3: My mother had some college because she was a nurse.

*Int: Did you have a prior negative school experience?*

P3: No, I don't think so.

*Int: Either elementary or high school?*

P3: No, I don't think so.

*Int: Did you have a prior positive school experience?*

P3: Nothing too positive. It wasn't bad, but it wasn't . . . you know?

*Int: Were you diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school or did you feel that you learned differently than the other kids?*

P3: No.

*Int: Did you have any medical problems as a child? Eyesight, hearing, sinus . . . ?*

P3: No.

*Int: Did you require medication as a child?*

P3: No.

*Int: Did you require medication while you were working on your goals with ABE?*

P3: Yes.

*Int: Anything you want to mention?*

P3: I was diagnosed with diabetes. I take glynase.

*Int: Do you feel that had any impact on your learning or ability to concentrate?*

P3: No.

*Int: Do you consider yourself more of an individual determined to set your own course or a follower?*

P3: I guess I set my own course.

*Int: —Would you rather determine for yourself how to approach a task or be given guidance/assignments to show you how to carry it out?*

P3: I would prefer guidance to show me.

*Int: Do you like to attempt something first and then seek out guidance or have someone tell you step-by-step, I want you to do this, then I want you to do that, then I want you to do that?*

P3: Umm. Hmmm. I probably would try it first and then ask if I can't do it, I guess. That's probably what I would do. I don't know how to read manuals. So I guess I would try it first and then if I had trouble, go back and get help.

*Int: —Did you want your tutor to assign a set amount of work for you to do or determine for yourself what you could handle?*

P3: Determine by myself what I can handle.

*Int: Anything else you want to say about the last three? You feel that you like to set your own course rather than follow other people's program for you?*

P3: Right.

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Interview

1) *What were your goals in joining the program?*

P3: To get help with algebra and to help me through my computer course.

*Int: And to clarify, you were taking classes at CCV?*

P3: Yes.

*Int: — What helped you reach your goals?*

P3: Well, I found it helpful having you come to my home, because you seemed to come right after class or the next day while things were still fresh in my mind. That was really helpful to me because I lose it real quick.

*Int: Someone being able to come to your home and work on what you felt you needed help with?*

P3: Right. Shortly right after class when it was fresh in my mind, that was the biggest thing, I think.

2) *What were the things that were most important in helping you to achieve your goals? If you listed more than one thing in number one, then you'd want to find the most important thing that helped you. That kept you going, kept you working on it.*

P3: Kept me from feeling lost, too. Like algebra . . . I thought I was I was pretty lost in algebra. But I managed it and got a B.

*Int: So doing the actual work and seeing that you could do it and you were able to keep up?*

P3: That's about it.

3) *Did you ever think of quitting?*

P3: No.

*Int: —What kept you going if you had thought of quitting? You never got frustrated.*

P3: I was frustrated but I knew I had to do it. And when you came, it seemed to make sense afterwards. I didn't think of quitting.

4) *What things hindered your efforts to reach your goals? Some of these might be transportation, child care, things like that. Were any of those factors for you?*

P3: No.

*Int: If you had needed to come to the Learning Center, do you think that would have been a hindrance toward reaching your goal, as opposed to having someone*

*come?*

P3: Yeah, that probably would have been because I have a hard time with them in school and to transport them back and forth to school—for my school, I don't think I could have found the time to go there.

*Int: We should mention that you have two young children.*

P3: I have two young children, 3 and 5.

*Int: But having kids didn't stop you from completing your goals.*

P3: No.

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5) *Once you saw you could make progress, did that keep you going?*

P3: Yes.

*Int: —What helped you to feel that you were making progress?*

P3: Getting better grades.

*Int: In your CCV classes?*

P3: Yes.

*Int: So that was your major indicator that you were doing better.*

P3: Yep.

6) *Did any of the things you were studying make you want to continue? In other words, the subject content. Were you really excited about anything you were studying?*

P3: Probably the early education was good. And drawing.

*Int: This has to be related to ABE. Just what you studied with ABE, which was computer and algebra. Did you get inspired by either? And you can say no.*

P3: No. I wasn't too crazy about that.

*Int: Not even the computer?*

P3: I didn't like that course. Too much technical stuff.

*Int: But the computer stuff you did with ABE?*

P3: That helped. That helped me to comprehend what he wanted us to know. Like all those technical words and what they did. I couldn't get it through my head, but that [ABE] did help.

*Int: It helped but it didn't inspire you?*

P3: No.

*Int: It wasn't the subject matter itself?*

P3: No.

7) *What part of how the program works helped you the most—flexible time, location, materials, other?*

P3: I thought the [unintell.] should come to my home was a big plus. And your flexible hours were good because you worked around me, too. The little blue book was fun to work in.

*Int: The math book?*

P3: I liked that book. It was neat. All three of them really worked for me.

*Int: So, the type of material?*

P3: It all related to what I was studying at the time, so it helped master it.

*Int: But as a subject math wasn't particularly inspiring?*

P3: I'm not crazy about math.

*Int: But you felt the blue book was helpful?*

P3: I liked that book.

8) *What influence did your self-esteem have on your being able to continue?*

*(a) What was your view of yourself when you entered the program?*

*(b) Did it change while you were in the program?*

*—If yes, how?*

P3: I think it did boost my self-esteem, in the algebra one at least. I felt so lost in

algebra. That's when I first contacted you. That's seemed to help once I figured I could do it, then my self-esteem did go up.

*Int: You felt better about yourself when you could see that you could do it?*

P3: Yeah.

*Int: So feeling good about yourself, did that have any bearing on your wanting to continue in the program?*

P3: Yeah, I would say so.

*Int: You can say no if you want.*

P3: No, it really did.

9) *Did you have any support to reach your goals while you were in the program? —If so, who or what?*

P3: Personal support or technical support?

*Int: It can be anything, it can be family, your teacher, an agency.*

P3: I was in the Reach Up program so that was a lot of support for me. I reached my goal, through their child care and all that. Having you come was a big plus for me.

*Int: Did your family support your desire to reach your goals?*

P3: Yeah, I guess. My mother did. The kids weren't too thrilled but my mother liked it. She was my major baby-sitter, so she was a big plus.

*Int: —If a person, how did he/she show support for you? You mentioned how your mother showed support by baby-sitting . . .*

P3: By being here anytime I needed her. She was a big help. She gave me study time if I needed it. She was a big support. My other sister helped me.

*Int: How did Reach Up show support for you?*

P3: They paid for child care, and transportation. Plus they helped pay for classes, too, so that was . . . I'd be over my head in debt.

*How did you feel about your tutor coming to your house? Do you feel she showed*

*support for you?*

P3: She helped me get through my classes, which I never thought I'd be able to do. Showing me that I *could* do this work that I didn't think I could do.

*Int: So believing in you?*

P3: Yeah.

*Int: Do you think that was a major factor in you continuing? Or maybe not such a big factor? Do you think it was a factor at all in keeping you going?*

P3: Yeah, because I know that if I didn't pass my two classes, I would have lost my Reach Up and then I wouldn't have continued any education at all. So that's a big factor, to pass those classes. That's what I managed to do.

*Int: So you were really worried about not passing those classes when you called us in the beginning?*

P3: Uh-huh.

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Int: Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)? If you feel you haven't changed anything from your first response, we could go back to question 1, what your goals were and what helped you reach your goals. Your goal was to pass your computer and algebra class?

P3: Yeah.

Int: Initially you said that that was the most important impact in keeping you going, was that you wanted to pass those two classes.

P3: Right.

P3: And after considering some of these other things, like self-esteem, support, and so on, do you feel that any of those were more important or do you still feel the major motivator was to pass those classes?

P3: I think the self-esteem was a big thing with me. Having that boost in my algebra class was kind of a plus to keep me going because I'm kind of shy.

Int: So you still feel that having the goal of passing those classes had the greatest impact? Attaining that goal and keeping you going?

P3: Yeah. I would say so.

Int: Anything else?

P3: Coming into the home was a big thing. It's hard to go somewhere out when you've got so much going on in your life. I think it's easier when it's at home.

Background Information

Int: Are you female or male?

P4: Female.

Int: Married or single?

P4: Single.

Int: What is your current age?

P4: 40.

Int: How old were you when you joined ABE?

P4: 32.

Int: What was your age when you completed your goals?

P4: 40.

Int: Did you leave the program before completing your goals and then come back?

P4: No.

[From records—

Enrollments: 4/16/88 (GED)

9/18/91–9/28/92 (algebra help for CCV)

Exited: 12/92 (passed algebra)]

Int: Were you raising a family as you pursued your goals?

P4: Yes.

Int: Were you married or single as you worked on your goals?

P4: Single.

Int: Were you working outside the home while you studied?

P4: Yes.

Int: Were the places you studied rural or urban?

P4: I think it was both.

Int: That was Derby Line? I think we can really call it a city. Probably a small town?

P4: Uh-huh.

Int: So all your study has been primarily in Derby Line?

P4: Yes.

Int: So that would be a rural town? Would you agree with that?

P4: Just don't blink your eyes when you go through it.

Int: OK, a rural town. Did you study at home or in a learning center?

P4: At home.

Int: How many tutors did you work with?

P4: One. The best one, too.

Int: What grade did you complete in school?

P4: 11th.

Int: What grade did your father complete?

—your mother?

P4: I didn't grow up with them, I grew up in foster homes.

Int: Can we change this question to foster parents?

P4: No, because there were lots of foster homes.

Int: So you really didn't have anyone that you considered your mother or your father?

P4: No.

Int: Did you have a prior negative school experience?

P4: I think it was just my own attitude and feeling very insecure about myself.

Int: During elementary or high school or all the way through?

P4: I think it was all the way through. I had really low self-esteem as a child.

Int: So that affected your feelings toward school?

P4: Yeah, I felt like I couldn't do it. Because I felt so low about myself. Does that make sense?

Int: Yeah, definitely. So you didn't really enjoy going to school?

P4: No. I thought everyone was making fun of me.

Int: Do you feel that that impacted your ability to learn? How you felt about yourself, in elementary and secondary?

P4: Yes, I do. Only on my own part, not the teachers' and the schools' part. My self-esteem was so low I felt I couldn't learn. I wasn't smart enough to learn. It was all in my head, but that's what I felt at the time.

Int: Did you have a prior positive school experience?

P4: Yeah. I can remember in 7th grade, this teacher named Mrs. Richardson . . . I hated math, and she would not let me give up on math. She would make me stay after school until I learned it. And even when I said I knew what she was talking about, she knew I didn't really know. And then I had a social studies teacher that worked with me a lot. So I had two positive . . .

Int: Two teachers that took some time.

P4: That really cared.

Int: That made part of your school experience positive.

P4: Didn't make my attitude positive towards math, though. Still, after all these years.

Int: But did believing that you could do it, or seeing that you could do it . . .

P4: It was pretty neat.

Int: With that 7th grade teacher?

P4: Yes. It was pretty neat. Guess that my self-esteem was pretty bad.

Int: Were you diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school or did you feel that you learned differently than the other kids?

P4: Yeah, I thought I learned differently. I felt like I was too dumb to learn. That was my own feelings, nobody made me feel that way.

Int: So it wasn't that you were diagnosed with dyslexia or anything?

P4: No.

Int: You felt that you learned differently from the other kids. You felt you couldn't learn.

P4: That was my own self-esteem. I felt like I was dumb. Too dumb to learn. Which *sounds* dumb, don't it?

Int: No comments are dumb. Everything's valid. Did you have any medical problems as a child? Eyesight, hearing, sinus . . . ?

P4: Nope.

Int: Did you require medication as a child?

P4: Nope. Not that I can remember, anyway.

Int: Did you require medication while you were working on your goals with ABE?

P4: No. Just when I was taking math, I could have used some Thorazine.

Int: Do you consider yourself more of an individual determined to set your own course or a follower?

P4: Set my own course.

Int: —Would you rather determine for yourself how to approach a task or be given guidance/assignments to show you how to carry it out?

P4: That would depend on what the task is.

Int: For instance, in education . . .

P4: If it was math, I would need guidance and assignments. Anything else, I could do it on my own. „Cause, like at Springfield College, when you do an independent study, you have to write up your own independent study, and sometimes that was hard.

Int: And determine how you were going to carry out your independent study?

P4: Yeah.

Int: You didn't have any problems doing that?

P4: It was just different from your normal teaching.

Int: —Did you want your tutor to assign a set amount of work for you to do or determine for yourself what you could handle?

P4: Determine for myself what I could handle. „Cause you always yelled at me for

going faster. If it's something difficult, like math, I'd probably need help.

Int: So your general approach would be to try to figure it out by yourself first and then if you couldn't, get some help?

P4: Get some help. Like I did. I got you for a tutor.

Int: 'Cause you wanted help with your math. So you wouldn't be comfortable with someone who says to you, "Next week I want five pages done." You'd rather do a comfortable amount yourself?

P4: Yes.

Int: Putting something together, like if you get a box and all the parts are there, would you just as soon sit down and try to figure it out by yourself or would you rather have someone show you?

P4: I'd rather figure it out by myself, because I fix a lot of things. Tear it apart and fix it myself. I always feel like somebody's in the way.

Int: So you don't really like somebody giving you direction unless you need it?

P4: No, I don't.

Interview

1) *What were your goals in joining the program?*

P4: In the beginning, it was to get my GED. Then after I started doing it, I enjoyed doing the work. My goal was to go to college but at first I didn't think I was smart enough to go.

Int: Your initial goal was GED and then to get through your math classes, so that you could get your degree? Because you came in at two different times, right?

P4: Yes.

Int: — What helped you reach your goals?

P4: Jeanne Dickinson. And determination.

Int: Who is Jeanne Dickinson?

P4: Jeanne Dickinson was my tutor.

Int: And determination?

P4: You have to have determination to reach your goals. If you don't have determination, you're not going to reach them.

Int: And your tutor? She helped you to reach your goals?

P4: Yes. She was the one that kept giving me confidence to reach my goals. I didn't think I was good enough and she kept pushing me. Not in a bad way. She kept giving me the confidence to reach my goals. without her I wouldn't have been in college.

Int: She helped you believe that you could do it? Helped you believe in yourself?

P4: She did a lot.

2) *What were the things that were most important in helping you to achieve your goals?*

P4: My tutor. And determination.

Int: Both. You feel they were equally important?

P4: Yeah.

Int: Get your own determination to accomplish . . .

P4: Getting a college degree.

Int: When you started out, was that one of your goals or did you just want the GED?

P4: The GED in the beginning.

Int: And once you accomplished that, you decided you wanted a college degree?

P4: It was . . . not even before I accomplished it. My tutor asked me what my goal was and I said, to go to college, but I didn't think I was smart enough to go. Now I have a bachelor's degree thanks to her.

Int: That made you want to go on?

P4: Uh-huh.

3) *Did you ever think of quitting?*

P4: Yes.

Int: —What kept you going?

P4: Wanting that degree. With math and . . . During my bachelor's degree, we had to do a community project, and there was a lot of conflict among the other two parties I was working with. But I wanted the degree, so I had the determination to stay in there.

Int: One of your courses or projects caused some problems?

P4: It was the community project, that you have to work on for twelve months to get your bachelor's degree. I had to work with two other people. One of them had a control issue and tried to do everything. where I would rather do things by myself.

Int: You got frustrated with that?

P4: Very frustrated.

Int: And that made you think about dropping out?

P4: Yes. Because I felt that they were making me look bad. And then I just said, why should I quit when I know what's true? And then I had the determination to stay in there.

Int: So again, focusing on your goal . . .

P4: The degree. Yup.

4) *What things hindered your efforts to reach your goals?*

P4: The snow, maybe. If you miss so many days at Springfield College you get kicked out.

Int: I think they're talking about goals in the ABE program. Your GED. Anything?

P4: Just math. Didn't really hinder, just prolonged it.

Int: Some other things to be considered: transportation, child care, time . . . any of those things a hindrance?

P4: Nope.

Int: The only thing that was stopping you at points was your feeling about math?

P4: Yeah. I hate math. That's not even the word.

Int: But you did persevere!



5) *Once you saw you could make progress, did that keep you going?*

P4: Yes it did.

Int: —What helped you to feel that you were making progress?

P4: Passing grades.

Int: Grades in terms of your GED?

P4: Yes, and at college.

Int: Passing your classes at college?

P4: Yeah.

Int: That was a motivator, that kept you going?

P4: Yes.

6) *Did any of the things you were studying make you want to continue?*

P4: Yes.

Int: —What were those things?

P4: Psychology. Substance Abuse 1, 2, and 3. Communication skills classes.

Int: Again here, they're talking about specific to ABE.

P4: The only one of them I liked was English. But I still have trouble with my commas.

Int: —Why were they important to you?

P4: Because I like to write, but I just wanted to learn the right way to write. The correct way to write.

Int: So English was important . . .

P4: Because I like to write.

Int: You wanted to feel that you were writing the correct way.

P4: Yes.

Int: That kept you going, being in the program and learning something that you wanted to learn, English?

P4: Yes.

7) *What part of how the program works helped you the most—flexible time, location, materials, other?*

P4: The tutor. The tutor having patience with you. And giving you the drive to go on. When you thought you couldn't do something, she'd show you a different way to do it, and you could do it. She wouldn't give up on you.

Int: Do you feel that having someone come to your home had any bearing on it?

P4: Yes.

Int: Would you just as easily have been able to go to a learning center?

P4: No, „cause at that time I didn't have a car.

Int: In terms of the time that you were met, did that have any bearing on it?

P4: She was very flexible.

Int: Did you like the materials, or being able to change the materials if you didn't like them.

P4: Yes. I liked it all except for math.

8) *What influence did your self-esteem have on your being able to continue?*

P4: It boosted my self-esteem a lot. When I succeeded at something, it made me feel really good about myself.

Int: (a) What was your view of yourself when you entered the program?

(b) Did it change while you were in the program?

Int: —If yes, how?

P4: My view of myself when I entered the program was that I didn't think that I'd ever finish it, I didn't think I'd be smart enough. It did change while I was in the program because I could really learn. But I never knew it. Because of low self-esteem.

Int: You never believed you could learn?

P4: I didn't believe in myself. It changed my self-esteem. It made my self-esteem higher about myself.

Int: Being in the program.

P4: Yes.

Int: How do you feel your self-esteem changed because of the program?

P4: Because I value myself now, because I know I can do things if I really try.

Int: So by putting effort into something?

P4: Effort and determination.

9) *Did you have any support to reach your goals while you were in the program?*

: —If so, who or what?

P4: Yes, I did at one point, and it was with my tutor, because I was having a problem with college level math. I called her up and she agreed to help me. I made it through it. Without her I wouldn't have made it.

Int: Again, math was a stumbling block?

P4: Yeah.

Int: Was there any family support, or agency support?

P4: Fern Wright helped me a lot too. When I was having problems with the community project, I talked with her, and she helped me a lot, too.

Int: And she was associated with an agency?

P4: Department of Social Welfare. Reach Up.

Int: How about support from your kids?

P4: I don't think they really paid attention.

Int: —If a person, how did he/she show support for you? You mentioned your tutor and you mentioned the agency, the Reach Up program. How do you feel they showed support for you?

P4: They listened to me and my tutor came out and helped me when I was having problems. They gave me determination to go on. Fern Wright especially did it with college when I was ready to quit. I had four months left and she talked me into not dropping out.

Int: How did that happen?

P4: Just through conversation. Both of these people, when I graduated . . . They really praised me up where my own family didn't say anything. Like my relatives and stuff. To them I was no big deal, but to me it was a big deal.

Int: That was a big accomplishment for you. So you felt that you got encouragement.

P4: Yes, a lot.

Int: —Do you want to say more about that?

P4: I'd just like to say that, if I could, I'd go on to my master's degree, but I don't have a job so, I can't. If there was a way to get scholarships to pay for my master's degree, I'd keep going.

Int: Reach Up won't help in that?

P4: No. I don't think so. Not for the whole thing.

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*Int: Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)?*

P4: Determination. The determination and the desire to learn. To reach my bachelor's degree.

*Int: So having that definite goal in mind . . .*

P4: And I like learning. I miss the books.

*Int: Anything else you want to add?*

P4: No, thank you.

Background Information

*Int: Are you female or male?*

P5: Male.

*Int: Married or single?*

P5: Single.

*Int: What is your current age?*

P5: 18.

*Int: How old were you when you joined ABE?*

P5: 18.

*Int: What was your age when you completed your goals?*

P5: 18.

*Int: Did you leave the program before completing your goals and then come back?*

P5: No.

[From records—

*Enrolled: 8/24/95*

*Exited: 12/95 (got GED)*

*With program: 4 months]*

*Int: You said you hadn't studied for your GED anywhere else?*

P5: No, not really. Here and there, but I didn't really set it up and go through a whole .

..

*Int: You weren't involved in ABE in a different area?*

P5: No. I wasn't involved in any other programs.

*Int: Were you raising a family as you pursued your goals?*

P5: You could say that, but technically, no.

*Int: Were you married or single as you worked on your goals?*

P5: Single.

*Int: Were you working outside the home while you studied?*

P5: No. I was working at home.

*Int: You were working?*

P5: A regular job? Yes.

*Int: Employed at home and with others?*

P5: Yes.

*Int: You were employed at the place you were living at?*

P5: Yeah.

*Int: Were the places you studied rural or urban?*

P5: Quite rural.

*Int: —At home or in a learning center?*

P5: At home.

*Int: How many tutors did you work with?*

P5: One.

*Int: What grade did you complete in school?*

P5: 8th.

*Int: What grade did your father complete?*

P5: High school.

*Int: —your mother?*

P5: High school.

*Int: Did you have a prior negative school experience?*

P5: Yeah, I did. I went to elementary school in Maine. I had quite a negative experience. I was manufacturing a lot of it myself, of course. It just seemed that the way they dealt with education was more centered around discipline than it was about the learning, the material they were working with. I got picked on a lot and that distracted me from what we were there for. You could say it was

negative.

*Int: You didn't enjoy elementary school very much then.*

P5: I enjoyed my friends. We would study together, but there was a lot that I found negative.

*Int: Did you have a prior positive school experience?*

P5: I consider just the basic skills that I learned, reading, writing, math, positive, because I use that today. Again, my friends that I made. I don't remember a lot from those days anyways.

*Int: How was secondary school for you, positive or negative? Did you spend much time in high school? You went up to eighth.*

P5: I spent a few weeks in school, but I didn't learn while I was there.

*Int: Over all it was more negative than positive?*

P5: That's why I dropped out.

*Int: Were you diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school or did you feel that you learned differently than the other kids?*

P5: I was not diagnosed officially as having a learning disability. Actually I was considered one of the brighter kids in the school. I let other things get in the way of that. I was an emotional basket case in junior high. I felt that I learned differently. I felt that everyone else was learning more by rote. Before I even knew what to call it, I felt that I learned more in a creative way and more hands-on. Everyone else was like a machine, just another number. I'm number five, right? It's hard for me to explain exactly how I learn differently. I always felt different from the crowd. I never got into big cliques. I always stayed on my own, anyway. So I had an original way of going about things.

*Int: You felt the other kids were learning just by rote and you liked to do it more hands-on?*

P5: I liked to just delve into it. I liked creative writing, where we'd all get together and

brainstorm ideas. Not just like, you get up to the blackboard and "Two plus two is this, now repeat after me . . ." like that stereotypical public school teacher. I just liked the more creative style in learning experience.

*Int: Would that be tied into learning for a purpose? Not just for the sake of digesting?*

P5: Yeah. To further my knowledge. To enjoy what was happening while it was.

*Int: Did you have any medical problems as a child? Eyesight, hearing, sinus . . . ?*

P5: No. I was always very healthy. Not even allergic to anything.

*Int: Did you require medication as a child?*

P5: No.

*Int: Did you require medication while you were working on your goals with ABE?*

P5: No.

*Int: Do you consider yourself more of an individual determined to set your own course or a follower?*

P5: Definitely an individual. I tried to be a follower but it never worked out.

*Int: —Would you rather determine for yourself how to approach a task or be given guidance/assignments to show you how to carry it out?*

P5: I like a mixture of both. It also depends on what the task is.

*Int: In terms of learning, for instance, fractions: would you rather try them out yourself first, or have someone sit down and show you the steps and then go ahead and try it?*

P5: I guess that I prefer to have someone go over it first. And then try it.

*Int: In terms of a learning situation, like a school, educational. What about a different kind of task, like maybe building something? or you order something and you get all the parts and you put it together. Are you the type of person that likes to try it first and then if it doesn't work, ask somebody?*

P5: Yeah. I would try it first. I feel like I have a mechanical aptitude. I'm trying to cultivate it. When I get a hold of something like that, I try to figure it out by myself.

"Oh, this is connected to this."

*Int: It depends on the task.*

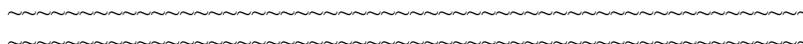
P5: Yes.

*Int: —Did you want your tutor to assign a set amount of work for you to do or determine for yourself what you could handle?*

P5: It think it would vary. I didn't mind having assignments, like do this and this and this. For some people that's kind of intimidating. "Oh, I have these ten pages and I'll never be able to get through this." I didn't mind having an assignment. I can work well on my own too. When I'm motivated to do something for my own will. I like to work [unintell.] explore it.

*Int: Would you like the freedom to go beyond the set assignment if you felt you could handle it or would you feel comfortable just stopping when the five pages or whatever were done?*

P5: It would depend if I looked ahead and was curious about what I saw. If I was, I would just go on. I'd just keep doing it.



### Interview

1) *What were your goals in joining the program?*

P5: When I first set out to get my GED, I had no elaborate list of reasons. I just wanted to complete my high school education. For work, you have to have a high school diploma. Personal satisfaction.

*Int: Your primary goal in joining ABE was to get your GED?*

P5: Yeah.

*Int: — What helped you reach your goals?*

P5: I would say support from my family and friends helped a lot, Jasmine especially.

And her mother. Kept me going. It was an inner will thing. The material did interest me too. I liked to study, I like academic work. If something interests me, I'm going to follow it. I did set it up as a goal. "You're going to try to get the best score possible. You're going to participate in this, you're going to do this." And then you end up doing it.

*Int: You did get really good scores.*

P5: Yeah.

*Int: Support was a big factor, then.*

P5: Right.

2) *What were the things that were most important in helping you to achieve your goals? (I think we just covered that. You mentioned inner drive, determination, your own will, and support. Of those two things, which was the more important factor in keeping you going? Were they equally important?)*

P5: I would say it would be my own will. Anyone who's doing anything, that's what really counts. You can get outside support which would help immensely, still, it's you. You have to do it. I would rely on my own.

3) *Did you ever think of quitting?*

*Int: —What kept you going?*

P5: I think I did because it's sort of a bad habit of mine. I get frustrated really easy, because I have kind of a short fuse. I didn't really think seriously about quitting. It was just something like, "Look you didn't even go to high school." I was just determined to fill that gap in my education and my knowledge. I didn't seriously think of quitting.

4) *What things hindered your efforts to reach your goals?*

P5: No, I didn't feel like there was anything getting in the way at all. I had plenty of time to study. I had my own space to study in. There were no obstacles for me.

*Int: Transportation wasn't a factor? You had no problem getting to take the test?*

P5: The fact that I didn't have my own car and that I had to rely on someone else, but it was no problem for them. So it really wasn't a hindrance and there was no guilt involved. I didn't feel like I was burdening them. We were making trips into town for provisions anyway.

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5) *Once you saw you could make progress, did that keep you going?*

P5: Oh, yeah. I didn't have as much faith when I started out as when I actually got into the work and saw that I was capable.

*Int: —What helped you to feel that you were making progress?*

P5: Feedback from my tutor. Just looking at it myself, hey I didn't cheat, I did it all, I didn't look at any answers, and it worked.

*Int: You felt like you were understanding the material.*

P5: Yeah. Just that realization.

6) *Did any of the things you were studying make you want to continue?*

P5: I'm interested in the basic subjects. I felt it could be a little more rich. The material itself. I realize you're not working on a billionaire budget. I liked the passages in the reading skills section. I just like reading about science of any kind. That held my interest.

*Int: —What were those things?*

*—Why were they important to you?*

P5: There wasn't anything that *really* caught my interest. I didn't look at it that way, I just looked at it as a whole. To complete the test is the goal. It was very cut and dry. "Do this, and that's that." I would have tried my best whether I was captivated by this or not.

7) *What part of how the program works helped you the most—flexible time, location,*

*materials, other?*

P5: I liked that tutors could come to your home. The flexible time. I thought it was a good setup.

8) *What influence did your self-esteem have on your being able to continue?*

*(a) What was your view of yourself when you entered the program?*

*(b) Did it change while you were in the program?*

*—If yes, how?*

P5: I'm pretty hard on myself, at least everyone tells me that. I don't have very high self-esteem. Back then, I was feeling even worse. Completing it did improve my confidence. Definitely. I really try to ignore my self-esteem. Just carry out the task

*Int: You did feel differently once you had completed it, though, compared to when you started?*

P5: Yeah. I felt better.

9) *Did you have any support to reach your goals while you were in the program?*

*—If so, who or what?*

P5: I would say Jasmine was really the soul . . . she would actually go over the material. I have other books, and we would go over the material together, actually sit down for a couple of hours and review some of this stuff.

*Int: She was a person in your household at the time.*

P5: Yeah.

*Int: —If a person, how did he/she show support for you? You said by actually going over the material and spending time reviewing with you.*

P5: Yeah.

*Int: —Do you want to say more about that?*

P5: I can just give you general answers. I had much support. I was very lucky in the group of people I was with. While I was up north there, people here were . . . I had so much support I couldn't get away from it.

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*Int: Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)? Do you still feel it was your inner drive and your will to accomplish it?*

*P5: Yeah. It's my belief that in any act that someone does, that's what really counts. You couldn't rely on other people or some magical thing [unintell.] It's you. You have to do it. You know, like, just do it. It's true.*

*Int: I think it's wonderful that you did accomplish your goal. You have your GED. You have a job, and your life is taking off. Anything else?*

*P5: I want to thank everyone at ABE. Everyone involved in the process. I'm very grateful.*

Background Information

*Int: Are you female or male?*

P6: Female.

*Int: Married or single?*

P6: Single.

*Int: What is your current age?*

P6: 16.

*Int: How old were you when you joined ABE?*

P6: 16.

*Int: What was your age when you completed your goals?*

P6: 16.

*Int: Did you leave the program before completing your goals and then come back?*

P6: No.

*Int: Were you raising a family as you pursued your goals?*

P6: No.

*Int: Were you married or single as you worked on your goals?*

P6: Single.

*Int: Were you working outside the home while you studied?*

P6: Some, not very much. I was mostly working [unintell.] for my parents. I may have been working some at Ö, but I don't think so.

*Int: So, part-time.*

*Int: Were the places you studied rural or urban?*

P6: Rural.

*Int: —At home or in a learning center?*

P6: Home tutor.

*Int: How many tutors did you work with?*

P6: Just one.

*Int: What grade did you complete in school?*

P6: 9th.

*Int: What grade did your father complete?*

*Int: —your mother?*

P6: I think they both graduated from college.

*Int: Did you have a prior negative school experience?*

P6: When I was in . . . yeah I couldn't get along with the teachers when I was [unintell.] Not really [unintell.] I don't do very well in math. I'd been to the Troy school for a while. I had a really hard time there. It could have been because (I'm) quite a bit different. My parents are kind of hippies. It was hard to fit in. Now, fitting in is not a big deal for me; I don't care. But then it was harder in elementary school. After 4th grade I went to [unintell.] After that, it was time for 6th grade to be over and I didn't know where I was going to go. People there said, well, you can do another 6th grade and do some different stuff and help out the other kids. I said OK. [unintell.]

*Int: So changing schools helped.*

P6: Some. Then after the second 6th grade was over I still didn't know where I wanted to go, because I really didn't want to go to the junior high up there just because [unintell.] and I didn't want [unintell.] For 7th and 8th grade I home schooled. My mother taught [unintell.] That was pretty good and I didn't get behind. Then I applied for a boarding school and I got a \$14,000 scholarship. So I went down to the Putney School, down by Brattleboro. That was really interesting, but there were a lot of really rich kids that didn't have any respect for anything really. Everything was disposable to them. It made it kind of hard to come from a farm, to come from the Northeast Kingdom and go to were people

where all from Boston and New York.

*Int: Different values, maybe?*

P6: Yeah! Really different values. Not that everyone in the Northeast Kingdom has the same values, but certainly there's a respect, pretty much.

*Int: Are you from the Northeast Kingdom?*

P6: Yeah, I was born in [unintell.] I lived in Troy.

*Int: So that was hard being in that type of school situation with kids that didn't have the same values.*

P6: Yeah, kids that didn't have respect for farms. I guess I have a bias there, because I come from a farming . . . I know how hard it is to farm and everything. Kids are like, "Ooh, you smell like cowshit." You know? It rubbed me the wrong way. After getting out of there, it was "What am I going to do now?" Because I didn't really want to go to North Country; I'd heard a lot of bad stories about NC. What if I get kicked out of there? I thought about going there. I called up to get a course listing. I almost signed up a bunch of times. There was this girl living with us. She was working on the farm that summer. She was not going to go back to school either, but she wasn't quite sixteen yet. I turned sixteen in July. She didn't know what she was going to do, either. She left, she was from Ithaca, NY, she went back there. I have this book, it's called *The Teenage Liberation Handbook*. I was reading it and it was all about how to get a real life and an education and quit school. I thought to myself, that's what I have to do, get my GED and do some things that I really want to do. That's what I'm in the process of doing now is trying to do what I really want to do. I'm confused about what that is now.

*Int: At your age sometimes it takes a while to sort that out exactly. But at least you're following what you want to do. Being true to yourself.*

P6: Yeah! I think so, I'm trying.

*Int: From 9th through your GED you went to Putney School, and from then you didn't do anything?*

P6: I was working on a farm. It's was all summer. I didn't take a school year. I hadn't completed it. I started to work on it. [unintell.]

*Int: Did you have a prior positive school experience?*

P6: There were quite a bit of positive things. I'm glad I went to 9th grade at that school because I learned to write essays, and I started to write stories. I'd always wrote a lot. [unintell.] I was writing [illeg.] A lot of that stuff I felt was bullshit and I didn't want to do it. I liked my writing teacher and my history teacher a lot.

*Int: That made it somewhat worthwhile.*

P6: In third grade, I think I had a good experience. I had this teacher (she teaches in Derby) [unintell.] She was my third grade teacher and I loved her.

*Int: Over all, if you weighed the positives and the negatives, it seems like the negatives outweighed the positives?*

P6: Yeah, but I learned a lot from the negatives. I think even if I were in school right now, it might be hard for me to be there and not want to drop out. I'd still be learning. I feel like I have to look at things with that attitude, because I don't learn from what I do, [unintell.] No matter what it is, I have to learn something. I usually do, even if it's that I don't want to work in a restaurant again.

*Int: You learn from your experiences.*

P6: Yeah, I mean, I have to.

*Int: Were you diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school or did you feel that you learned differently than the other kids?*

P6: I don't think so, except for math. I haven't been diagnosed with learning disability. I feel I learn a bit differently, or I have to pay more attention than other kids in math. I get along pretty good. I do what I need to do. I count on my fingers sometimes.

*Int: You didn't have dyslexia or anything like that?*

P6: No.

*Int: Did you have any medical problems as a child? Eyesight, hearing, sinus . . . ?*

P6: I don't think so.

*Int: Did you require medication as a child?*

P6: No.

*Int: Did you require medication while you were working on your goals with ABE?*

P6: No.

*Int: Do you consider yourself more of an individual determined to set your own course or a follower?*

P6: I guess an individual, except in math.

*Int: —Would you rather determine for yourself how to approach a task or be given guidance/assignments to show you how to carry it out?*

P6: Some of each. Usually I do something better if I do it myself, if I figure out how to do it myself. A lot of times it's hard for me to [unintell.] start a project on my own, get the confidence to say, "OK, I'm going to build this thing." I was to build a hot box to put spinach and lettuce in. I had this old window, and the window had this junk taken out of it all the way around three sides and one side didn't. I said, "OK, one board has to be higher than the other one." I got really frustrated, "Mom, how do I make this?" I felt like I really should of made it myself and not had her help me, but I didn't. Little things like that.

*Int: Is your general approach to try it yourself first and then ask for help or would you . . .*

P6: Yeah, I would rather do it myself, but sometimes I fall back on people.

*Int: Sometimes you need a little extra.*

P6: Yeah.

*Int: A couple of people have commented that they would approach an educational*

*task differently than putting something together.*

*Int: —Did you want your tutor to assign a set amount of work for you to do or determine for yourself what you could handle?*

P6: Determine for myself.

*Int: Instead of someone saying, "I want five pages done by next week," you prefer to be told, "Do what you can"? What you feel comfortable with?*

P6: Yeah. "Here's what I'd like you to do. Do of that what you can." Because there were certain . . . there was just math [unintell.] pretty much. I guess I did the practice test and figured out where I was. I seemed OK. She gave me [unintell.] math books [unintell.] So I worked on those.

*Int: So within certain parameters, if you feel comfortable up to this point, you wanted some leeway, some flexibility.*

P6: [unintell.] I didn't get anything done, that was Thursday. "Oh, Barbara's coming down the hill! I haven't done any math!" [unintell.] if I do. "Oh, you haven't done any math, have you?"

*Int: We all deal with that when people get busy with their lives, especially.*

P6: I don't know what I was doing that made me so busy. I just have to make an effort to remember to do my math.

*Int: But as long as you're willing to work together when the tutor shows up, the program's set up.*

P6: Yeah, it was perfect.

*Int: You like some flexibility?*

P6: Yeah.

*Int: In terms of how much work you got done?*

P6: Yeah.

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## Interview

1) *What were your goals in joining the program?*

P6: I wanted to get my GED so that I wouldn't have to worry about finishing high school. So that I could go on and do something else.

*Int: — What helped you reach your goals?*

P6: One thing that helped me reach my goals was . . . I was about to leave for southern Vermont, around December 20, to work at an inn, which I thought would be a cooking job but it turned out to be a cleaning job. I was ready to leave and Barbara said, "Well, there's one more testing time before you leave. OK you have to go and take your math test." I came here before, and looked at some math books. I got all psyched up to do it, wrote lots of lucky things on my overalls. Went and took the math test and I was done. The math test was the last one I took. Barbara helped by saying, "You have to take it before you leave."

*Int: By encouraging you and helping you?*

P6: Yeah. I don't think I would have not finished, I think I would have taken the math test later. [unintell.] I guess it was on my mind to do it.

*Int: Can you think of anything else?*

P6: My parents did, in a way, but more probably the determination not to go back to high school. Determination to get on with my life.

*Int: You felt determined that you were going to do this and reach your goal?*

P6: Uh-huh.

2) *What were the things that were most important in helping you to achieve your goals?*

P6: Probably Barbara. She was a very powerful [unintell.] I couldn't have done it without her. I wouldn't have known really where to start without her. She helped me move forward.

3) *Did you ever think of quitting?*

*Int: —What kept you going?*

P6: I didn't really have a choice. Quitting school was a big enough deal that no one in either of my parents' families had ever done that. "Oh, <name>'s quitting school!" Big deal! No. I never thought of quitting.

*Int: You never got frustrated to the point where . . . ?*

P6: No. I was frustrated enough at school. It was great to be able to work with someone once a week and working toward an accomplishable goal. It was good. So I didn't think of quitting the program now.

*Int: You felt it was something you could accomplish.*

P6: Yes. [unintell.]

*Int: You said you started and just went all the way through? Do you remember how long it took to complete your program? Like how many months you were in it?*

P6: I think I started in September and ended in December.

*Int: So you got through fairly quickly?*

P6: I think so. I might have started in October, but I think it was September.

4) *What things hindered your efforts to reach your goals? You said you never really thought of quitting, but some things people mention as hindrances are transportation, child care, family problems, moving, things like that.*

P6: I got my license in early October, so I was able to drive to tests. I think there was only one time I had someone drive me to a test. Transportation wasn't a big problem.

*Int: Lack of quiet study space of anything like that?*

P6: Yeah, it's kind of hard to study at home, but . . . I didn't have that many hindrances. I guess lack of [unintell.] to do math, confusion of math.

*Int: Math anxiety?*

*Int: Yeah. But it was surmountable.*

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5) *Once you saw you could make progress, did that keep you going?*

P6: I don't know. I really don't know. I guess it did. As far as math went, I wasn't sure I would be able to do it when I got to the testing, but then I called up and Barbara came by the next day [unintell.] "Oh, you did OK!" I never knew if I was making progress or not.

*Int: Until you took that GED test you weren't sure.*

P6: Yeah, I knew I was understanding it all a little bit better, but as far as those numbers, I got pretty confused when I look at them.

*Int: —What helped you to feel that you were making progress? You felt like you were understanding it?*

P6: Better. Yeah. I guess I felt I was making progress when I got most of the test completed and I had just two left.

*Int: When you saw you were passing them.*

P6: Yeah.

*Int: So you took them one at a time?*

P6: I was going to do [unintell.]

6) *Did any of the things you were studying make you want to continue?*

*—What were those things?*

*—Why were they important to you?*

P6: The subjects were OK. I didn't really look at it as like . . . The subjects were [unintell.] as far as . . . I felt like [unintell.] I had to study for the test and I had to get through it. The part I was studying might not [unintell.] but . . . Did the subjects make me want to continue with my goals or did the subjects make me want to continue learning?

*Int: To reaching your goals as opposed to dropping out. Like were you really inspired by anything, like you really loved math.*

P6: No, not really.

*Int: And if so was it like I want to be sure to be here next week because I want to do more.*

P6: No. It was just to get my GED made me follow through on it. Also, Barbara poking.

*Int: Encouraging you.*

P6: Yeah, those were the main things. And I think [unintell.]

*Int: You said you just studied math, that the other subjects you didn't really need help?*

P6: No [unintell.] All the real tests came out about the same as the [unintell.] test did.

*Int: That was a good indicator of how you were going to do.*

7) *What part of how the program works helped you the most—flexible time, location, materials, other?*

P6: Flexible time and location, probably. Plus the encouragement.

*Int: It was easier to have someone come to your home than to have to go out?*

P6: Yeah, it was.

*Int: And you say encouragement, too.*

8) *What influence did your self-esteem have on your being able to continue?*

*(a) What was your view of yourself when you entered the program?*

*(b) Did it change while you were in the program?*

*—If yes, how?*

P6: I guess I felt my esteem . . . it isn't always that great. It's not really bad. Sometimes, I feel like [unintell.] So that was probably what made me think I wasn't going to be able to do the math test [unintell.] I did and I came through. I

guess I didn't have a very good [unintell.] of myself. I was pretty scared.

*Int: So prior to taking the test it was . . .*

P6: Yeah! Math is like that for me, and I guess some other bad habits. [unintell.]

*Int: Once you passed the math test, did that change how you felt about yourself?*

P6: Maybe a little, but not a lot.

*Int: Did getting your GED change how you felt about yourself?*

P6: Yeah, I guess. I don't know. Yeah I think it did a little bit. It made me feel like I'd accomplished something. I expect a lot more of myself than I usually get done. It was good that I accomplished what I set out to do. I wish that I could have done more in that period of time. I always think, oh I have to do something. I don't know what to do [unintell.]

9) *Did you have any support to reach your goals while you were in the program?  
—If so, who or what?*

P6: Yeah. Both Barbara and my parents. They were mostly encouraging me. Barbara was helping me a lot.

*Int: —If a person, how did he/she show support for you? You said Barbara was helping you with your math.*

P6: Mostly my parents on account of [unintell.] but I guess it worked. They were like, "Oh you got to get your GED."

*Int: Encouragement! Strong encouragement!*

P6: I mean they weren't like scary, but they were like "Whoa! You have to *get* it! [unintell.] before you go anywhere."

*Int: They made you feel that it was really important then.*

P6: Kind of. Yeah. It was important to me too, so . . . They thought I wasn't working hard enough to do it. "You'd better work on your math, you know." OK.

*Int: So knowing that somebody cared that you accomplished your goal . . . ?*

P6: Yeah, I guess [unintell.] that they cared.

*Int: And if they hadn't been there encouraging you, do you think it would have been harder?*

*P6: It might have been a little bit harder, but I find that when I'm independent of them, I actually do a lot better. I don't rely on them to poke at me and "Go! Go! Do it." You know? I probably do things more on my own. I probably even do *more* things on my own than I do when they're egging me on something.*

*Int: Human nature, we don't like to be told what to do.*

*P6: I know. It's true.*

*Int: It sends us in the opposite direction. Did you want to say anything more about that question?*

*P6: No, that's everything.*

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Int: Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)? You mentioned determination and support from Barbara.

P6: Those two things.

Int: And these other things we discussed weren't really factors for you.

P6: Umm, kind of.

Int: Isolate the most important thing.

P6: Probably determination, I guess.

Int: You decided you wanted to do it, and you were going to do it.

P6: No ands, ifs, or buts.

Background Information

Int: Are you female or male?

P7: Female.

Int: Married or single?

P7: Unmarried but not single. Boy friend. Monogamous relationship.

Int: What is your current age?

P7: 30.5.

Int: How old were you when you joined ABE?

P7: 29.

Int: What was your age when you completed your goals?

P7: 30.

Int: Did you leave the program before completing your goals and then come back?

P7: No.

Int: Were you raising a family as you pursued your goals?

P7: Yes, I was.

Int: Were you married or single as you worked on your goals?

P7: Single.

Int: Were you working outside the home while you studied?

P7: No.

Int: Were the places you studied rural or urban?

P7: I'd say urban. Right in the middle of a town.

Int: Rural town?

P7: A little, tiny town.

Int: —At home or in a learning center?

P7: At home.

Int: How many tutors did you work with?

P7: One.

Int: What grade did you complete in school?

P7: Half of a college year.

Int: What grade did your father complete?

Int: —your mother?

P7: My mother dropped out of school and then she went back. She went to Johnson for a while under some sort of program. Then she dropped out of that so she didn't even complete a semester of college.

Int: Do you think she graduated from high school?

P7: I think she got her GED instead.

Int: Did you have a prior negative school experience?

P7: Absolutely! I couldn't see well. I could not see the board, and I was just brushed over in math. I was never given any extra help and I would ask for help. There was an obvious preference for the boys and the richer girls. The high-class girls got the help, but I was a poor child. From the wrong side of the tracks, so I was clearly neglected. And didn't know my multiplication.

Int: You feel the teachers didn't really take the time with you?

P7: They absolutely did not take the time. I was passed along because my English, my language skills were so great. But I was just passed along each year when I should not have been. I figure I was at the third or fourth grade level, math-wise. But I was reading Shakespeare and stuff in the fifth grade, but I couldn't multiply.

Int: So mostly problems with teachers, it seems.

P7: Right. I was quiet. I would at least have gotten negative attention if I had acted up. They would have noticed me. But they didn't really notice me.

Int: They just kind of passed you on.

P7: I was passed on because my other grades were so good.

Int: As far as peers, and like that . . . ?

P7: That was good.

Int: It was mostly the teachers that gave you the negative.

P7: Right. And that was just by neglect. It was nothing verbally said to me or any demeaning looks or anything; it was just that I was ignored. Many times, I had gone and asked for help. And was not given help.

Int: Did you have a prior positive school experience?

P7: Words. I wanted to keep on learning more words. I wanted to quit school when I was fifteen because I was so embarrassed about my *math!* I was in basic math for like four years in a row. In the same little rut I was in, and not getting any one-on-one help. Or even peer help would have been great.

Int: They kept you in the same class?

P7: Yes, the same basic math.

Int: You've come so far in your math now!

P7: I needed *help*. I asked them for help and I told them that numbers scare me. It takes me a while to get over something that scares me, but once I've got it, I got it. Just give me some help!

Int: A positive was words. And then the negative stuff was mostly just feeling that you wanted to learn the math but weren't getting the help for it.

P7: Right. That wasn't just feeling it, because it was a fact!

Int: And that's what made you want to drop out?

P7: I really wanted to.

Int: Because of the math.

P7: Right. But then I loved reading so much. Lots of good books in school! If you quit school you don't get to read.

Int: Were you diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school or did you feel that you learned differently than the other kids?

P7: No, but I did, the summer before my junior year . . . I had all these things that had to be done through Upward Bound, and they said that I was borderline *genius*. But if I'm not interested in something, it takes me a long time to learn it. If I think it's beneath me, then <PHTWAKK>! Horse pockey! But I do learn slowly sometimes.

Int: Does that depend on the subject?

P7: Yeah.

Int: Or in general?

P7: No, not in general. I pick up on most things quite quickly. It's just that if it has anything to do with numbers . . . I'm better at it now that I've had so much help, but I'm still insecure about it.

Int: Did you have any medical problems as a child? Eyesight, hearing, sinus . . . ?

P7: Oh, yes, my eyes! It was terrible! If you can't see the blackboard, you don't do well.

Int: Did they figure out that you need glasses?

P7: Yes. My mother was finally forced to bring me to get glasses, because the schools had said, "She needs glasses." It took her about a year and a half to finally get me the glasses I needed.

Int: Do you know what grade you were in when you finally got the glasses?

P7: It was the summer before I went to fourth grade. I had major problems: headaches, dizzy spells. I would put my head down on the desk and rest because squinting and writing and squinting and stuff will give me a headache trying to focus and I was right up at the front of the class.

Int: Near-sighted.

P7: I can't see far.

Int: That probably contributed to . . .

P7: Oh, absolutely! It didn't help that my mother would go in ranting and raving; she

probably scared them. They avoided me!

Int: Did you require medication as a child?

P7: No.

Int: Did you require medication while you were working on your goals with ABE?

P7: No.

Int: Do you consider yourself more of an individual determined to set your own course or a follower?

P7: I used to be a follower, but I am no longer insecure in who I am. Number 7 is a very strong individual determined to set her own course!

Int: That's changed over time, then.

P7: Yes. It's been a gradual thing.

Int: —Would you rather determine for yourself how to approach a task or be given guidance/assignments to show you how to carry it out?

P7: I would rather have the chance to figure it out for myself and then ask for help when I need it. I'm a firm believer in you ask for help when you need it. There's nothing demeaning about asking for help . . . when necessary. Not like my son who wants me to *do* his homework! Sometimes, I'm good at math now.

Int: You are! You really are! I really feel you've accomplished your math goal.

—Did you want your tutor to assign a set amount of work for you to do or determine for yourself what you could handle?

P7: I'd determine for myself what I could handle. Which is often more than my tutor could.

Int: You would do more in going on?

P7: I would feel guilty because I would be at the beach . . . you know, when you're baking at the beach, you turn over. So I'd be on a roll, and my back would burn but I'd do pages and pages for you to correct.

Int: You prefer to do that rather than a rigid "You have to have five pages by next

week"? Some people need that in order to get it done. They need a schedule set up for themselves.

P7: I would have to stop myself because I would feel guilty because I was doing too many pages for you to correct. When there are all the other students that need help also. Let's face it, some times you're awful slow. Ha-ha, just kidding.

Interview

1) *What were your goals in joining the program?*

P7: My goals were to become more confident in my math skills. My permit! I was even more afraid of driving than I was of numbers.

Int: You've gotten your license?

P7: Oh, Yeah!

Int: You wanted to improve your math skills and learn to drive.

— What helped you reach your goals?

P7: My children and my tutor not giving up on me. I thought that I was stupid. I would have troubles with it. I would get so frustrated that I was convinced that I was a moron. My tutor and my children never, ever said anything demeaning to me and encouraged me throughout it all.

2) *What were the things that were most important in helping you to achieve your goals?*

P7: My children. I enjoyed seeing them feeling proud of their mother. She was achieving her goals, even though they knew I was frightened. I don't like failing and I don't like doing anything if I think there's a chance of failing. They never gave up on me.

Int: So they'd encourage you and ask you how it was going?

P7: Yes. And pester me if I said I'm not doing my homework tonight. Sitting down at the kitchen table at homework time, if I didn't want to do my homework well. My children would [unintell.]

Int: You guys did your homework together?

P7: Yes.

Int: Well, that sets a good example for them, too.

P7: They were very proud. It made me feel good to set a good example and know that I was frustrated and having a hard time and they could see that I was frustrated and having a hard time, but I stuck it out.

Int: You persevered.

P7: Bless your little notes that said I'm not stupid on my homework! "Great Job!"—those helped.

Int: I never for once thought you were stupid.

3) *Did you ever think of quitting?*

P7: Yes, I thought of quitting many, many times.

Int: —What kept you going?

P7: Once again, it was my children and my tutor.

Int: In terms of thinking of quitting, just frustration was the actual word?

P7: Yes. I was having a hard time with memorizing my multiplication so it would come automatically. With the fear of them, I still have problems. But I can figure out now, and I know I have the skills to figure it out but I did not think that I did.

Int: You've mastered those now pretty much.

P7: Pretty much! I still don't do as well as I think I should.

Int: So your kids kept you going?

4) *What things hindered your efforts to reach your goals?*

P7: The only thing that really hindered me was myself. My own fear of inadequacy.

Int: Your fear of inadequacy? Self-confidence? What about other things? I know you

weren't going for your GED because you already graduated. You were doing this for self-improvement, like you said, to better your math skills. Would things like transportation, child care, study time, would any of those have any bearing on hindering your efforts to reach your goals?

P7: Sometimes those were difficult problems to overcome, but they didn't really hinder. Those were just problems to overcome.

Int: One thing did hinder?

P7: My lack of self-confidence? It was all my own doing. I did not have the confidence in myself to keep on going. I didn't think that I could do certain points. Each time that I felt that, my tutor would spend extra time explaining it to me. Then I would realize that I really wasn't a moron. So, I'd keep on going.

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5) *Once you saw you could make progress, did that keep you going?*

P7: Oh, absolutely! I had more faith in myself.

*Int: So that was a motivator?*

P7: A very large motivator.

*Int: —What helped you to feel that you were making progress?*

P7: I was understanding. In my mind numbers always looked like some sort of ancient writing. Some sort of words I couldn't understand! You can't just spell a word with numbers, well, actually you can. In certain areas.

*Int: So when you saw that you were understanding, then you knew that you were progressing.*

P7: Right.

6) *Did any of the things you were studying make you want to continue?*

*—What were those things?*

*—Why were they important to you?*

P7: I still hate math! I will always, always hate math. It did not make me not want to continue, it just made me . . . I didn't want to give up. I didn't want to fail and let everybody down—my children and my tutor, who believed in me when I wasn't believing in myself. I think I'm always going to hate math.

*Int: You weren't particularly inspired by math?*

P7: No! No! But numbers don't make me want to be ill anymore.

*Int: Were there any other things? I know we did some computer for a little while.*

P7: That was so great!

*Int: Was that anything that you felt was inspiring or not?*

P7: Because of that, I know that I can write stories and my daughter, since she has passed away, I can use the stories that she has written, and decipher her horrible spelling, and make stories for other children on the computer, since I have the skills. And now I have the confidence to know that I can do a children's story.

*Int: You did write a book for the program.*

P7: Yes.

*Int: You've taken more computer classes on your own.*

P7: Yes, many more.

*Int: Beyond ABE.*

P7: And I'll be taking many more classes! Not in computer, though, in Nurse's Aide.

*Int: But the math was not a particularly interesting topic.*

P7: No. But I don't feel worthless anymore. I understand it and because I have the math skills I have more confidence about the rest of my life.

7) *What part of how the program works helped you the most—flexible time, location, materials, other?*

P7: That's difficult because when you started coming to me, I had no transportation. I had lots of time, but you worked around my children's schedules. You weren't

there when they were at home, but when they were at school. Then you came to me and brought me so many materials, it was all beneficial. Without all of that stuff, I would not have been able to go to ABE and learn.

*Int: It would have been hard to go to a learning center?*

P7: It would have been impossible.

*Int: And the variety of materials?*

P7: Oh yes! You brought so much it would sometimes overwhelm me! So much to choose from!

8) *What influence did your self-esteem have on your being able to continue?*

*(a) What was your view of yourself when you entered the program?*

*(b) Did it change while you were in the program?*

*—If yes, how?*

P7: I think I've actually answered this, because my self-esteem was low. I didn't think that I had the ability to learn. Math-wise. For everything else I was very confident. My self-esteem is very high now. I know that I can overcome obstacles that seem like mountains.

*Int: So it changes after being involved in ABE?*

P7: Oh, absolutely! For the positive.

9) *Did you have any support to reach your goals while you were in the program?*

*Int: —If so, who or what?*

*—If a person, how did he/she show support for you?*

P7: You and my kids! You were great!

*Int: Recap how your kids showed support for you.*

P7: They would question me on what I had learned. Todd was terrible! It was particularly bad when I was frustrated because I would tell him "Oh, I haven't learned anything. I don't know, I'm dumb!" And he would say, "No, you're not dumb." And my daughter was very, very proud of me, especially she knows my

fear of going fast. Learning to drive was the thing she was proudest of and did not give up on me. My three main people were you Todd and Marie, and none of you gave up on me.

*Int: How do you feel your tutor showed support for you?*

P7: Every week, when I'd say I did not get this, she would stay with me until I got it, would go and get me *extra* material, and go out of her way to see that I got it, that I learned it. Above and beyond. I can't put it into words without it sounding shallow.

*Int: I think I got it. You also mentioned previously that you sat down and did your homework with your kids.*

P7: My daughter didn't do homework. She colored. And harassed me and Todd. But it was our quiet time, and I wouldn't do all my homework, obviously, but I would sit down and it was showing them that we were doing it together. While I would do a page or two and Todd would do a small amount of his homework, we were getting homework done. I would finish up when they were asleep.

*Int: And them sitting there with you kept you going?*

P7: Yes. It made me feel good about myself for setting another good example.

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*Int: Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)?*

P7: You and the knowledge that I could do it with your help. I don't want to pat you on the back too much to give you a fat head, but I couldn't have done it without you. I would still be in the same rut, because if any other tutor had come to me, I would have rejected that person, especially if it had been a male. You're very, very patient. You kind of had to be with me.

*Int: Sometimes other tutors are good also. Sometimes it's just developing a relationship with that person. There are other good tutors out there too. How did you answer 1 in the beginning.*

P7: I wanted to feel pride in myself, and I couldn't with my lack of number knowledge and driving. I just couldn't feel completely good about myself. There were many other areas that I was excelling in, but the stuff I didn't know brought me down too much. And made me feel inferior to other people.

*Int: What the one major thing, do you think it was your drive to overcome that? Or maybe your desire to reach your goal and your support from your kids and your tutor?*

P7: They all factor in so much, it's hard to decipher which one is more important. You, my children, or my own desire. Because they're all right there together. If one of them had been gone, I think that would have affected the other factors. If I said it was you, I would be belittling my own feelings of wanting to conquer that mountain or I would be belittling my children's help. Which is so incredible. It doesn't compare, really, because your help was knowledge help as well as emotional, but theirs was love and emotional and pride. And it all went together nicely.

*Int: Anything else you'd like to add?*

P7: That's it? Oh! I'd just hope that this program continues for many years. And that the tutors that they have, that they respect those tutors, because we *need* them in the north country. There are many, many women out there that are in the same situation I'm in. That are with children, that need knowledge because knowledge is power. If we don't have power, how are we going to raise our children right? If we don't have tutors that don't have the hours and the support system that they need, the women of the Northeast Kingdom are going to be lacking, which means that their children are lacking. That's my view.



Background Information

*Int: Are you female or male?*

P8: Male.

*Int: Married or single?*

P8: Single.

*Int: What is your current age?*

P8: 17.

*Int: How old were you when you joined ABE?*

P8: 17.

*Int: What was your age when you completed your goals?*

P8: 17.

*Int: Did you leave the program before completing your goals and then come back?*

P8: No.

*Int: Do you remember how many months it took you to get through?*

P8: About six.

*Int: Were you raising a family as you pursued your goals?*

P8: No.

*Int: Were you married or single as you worked on your goals?*

P8: Single.

*Int: Were you working outside the home while you studied?*

P8: No.

*Int: Were the places you studied rural or urban?*

P8: Do you call this urban?

*Int: Kind of like a rural town, huh?*

P8: Kind of urbanish during the winter and rural during the summer.

*Int: We'll call it a rural town.*

*—At home or in a learning center?*

P8: I did most of it at home but I did a little of it at a learning center.

*Int: When you met with your tutor, did she come to your home or did you meet at a learning center?*

P8: I'd meet her at that church down the street.

*Int: How many tutors did you work with?*

P8: Just one.

*Int: What grade did you complete in school?*

P8: 11th.

*Int: What grade did your father complete?*

*—your mother?*

P8: 9th or 10th.

*Int: For both of them?*

P8: Yeah. They dropped out and got married.

*Int: Did you have a prior negative school experience?*

P8: Not really.

*Int: You liked elementary school?*

P8: Yeah.

*Int: And high school?*

P8: High school wasn't that bad. They had a few too many rules. It's just something you got to deal with.

*Int: You weren't crazy about the rules.*

P8: No.

*Int: Did you have a prior positive school experience?*

P8: When I was in the high school, when I joined the culinary class, that was kind of helpful. Gave me an outlook on life.

*Int: There wasn't anything negative that made you want to drop out and do your GED instead?*

P8: I just wanted to start college a little bit earlier, 'cause my grades weren't that good at the time, 'cause I messed around too much. I wasn't going to be able to graduate the right year, so I wanted to drop out and get my GED and go to college.

*Int: At the same year you would have gone.*

P8: Yeah. To stay on schedule.

*Int: Were you diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school or did you feel that you learned differently than the other kids?*

P8: No.

*Int: Did you have any medical problems as a child? Eyesight, hearing, sinus . . . ?*

P8: In my first grade year and my second grade year, I had to get tubes in my ears because I couldn't hear words properly.

*Int: Did that have any impact on your learning to read?*

P8: No. Just on pronouncing words. I'd hear sounds and pronounce them different.

*Int: Did you require medication as a child?*

P8: No.

*Int: Did you require medication while you were working on your goals with ABE?*

P8: No.

*Int: Do you consider yourself more of an individual determined to set your own course or a follower?*

P8: An individual.

*Int: —Would you rather determine for yourself how to approach a task or be given guidance/assignments to show you how to carry it out?*

P8: Find out for myself.

*Int: Some people have mentioned that this question should have been worded*

*differently. Some people say it depends on the task, that if it's an educational task or if it's building something. Suppose you were in school and you wanted to learn something, would you rather just try it on your own first and then ask for help, or would you rather have someone show you first?*

P8: I'd try it on my own first and then if I couldn't do it I'd get help.

*Int: Would that be the same way you'd approach something like building something or putting something together?*

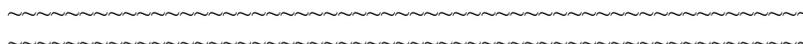
P8: Yeah.

*Int: —Did you want your tutor to assign a set amount of work for you to do or determine for yourself what you could handle?*

P8: Determine for myself what I could handle.

*Int: Some people like to have their tutor say something like "Have five pages done by next week." But then other people like a range, like if you feel comfortable you can do twenty pages or whatever. So we have different types of students that we work with. You rather have it more open-ended?*

P8: Yeah.



### Interview

1) *What were your goals in joining the program?*

P8: Just because I needed some kind of high school graduation to get into college.

*Int: — What helped you reach your goals?*

P8: Basically just knowing that if I messed up and didn't get it, I wouldn't be able to keep on schedule and go to college when I wanted to.

*Int: Wanting to stay on schedule so you get in when you were ready to.*

P8: Yeah.

2) *What were the things that were most important in helping you to achieve your goals?*

P8: Basically just wanting to have it on time.

3) *Did you ever think of quitting?*

P8: Nope.

4) *What things hindered your efforts to reach your goals?*

P8: When I took my English test for it, I got a bit lower score than I thought I was going to. Kind of made me feel bad about it, but when I took my science on the next one I scored really high so it made up for it.

*Int: Getting a lower score than you wanted made you doubt whether or not you wanted to keep going?*

P8: Yeah.

*Int: Transportation, child care, things like that weren't hindrances?*

P8: No.



5) *Once you saw you could make progress, did that keep you going?*

*—What helped you to feel that you were making progress?*

P8: Yeah. As I said before, with that low test grade in my English, when I took that science, it kept me going because it was my best score. I was kind of proud of it, so I kept going.

*Int: Was there anything else while you were working with your tutor that let you know you were making progress?*

P8: Not really. Just that I kept passing them all.

6) *Did any of the things you were studying make you want to continue?*

P8: Not really.

7) *What part of how the program works helped you the most—flexible time, location, materials, other?*

P8: Just basically how I could do it right in town. I didn't have to go very far to do it.

*Int: It wasn't a problem getting to the learning center for you?*

P8: No.

*Int: What about the time? Was it adequate for a convenient time?*

P8: It was all morning hours. It was easier for me.

8) *What influence did your self-esteem have on your being able to continue?*

*(a) What was your view of yourself when you entered the program?*

*(b) Did it change while you were in the program?*

*—If yes, how?*

P8: I guess just like after I got it, it brought up my self-esteem, because it's the first real thing in school that I've completed. That was nice.

*Int: That made you feel good about yourself?*

P8: Yeah.

*Int: When you ended the program, you felt differently from when you started the program?*

P8: Yeah.

*Int: As you were going through the program and saw that you were passing tests, do you think that at any point in the middle your level of self-esteem changed? Did you start feeling better about yourself as you were passing tests or was it just at the end when you finally got it?*

P8: Just at the end, mainly.

9) *Did you have any support to reach your goals while you were in the program?*

*—If so, who or what?*

P8: My parents were behind me. They said they were going to have a small party for me as soon as I got in. That helped out. My tutor, she helped me out a lot. She

always seemed to keep me interested.

*Int: Those are the two things you can think of that gave you support?*

P8: Yeah.

*Int: —If a person, how did he/she show support for you? You mentioned that your parents wanted to give you a party. Are there any other ways that they showed that they supported what you were doing?*

P8: Not really.

*Int: How did your tutor show support for you?*

P8: When I'd go over there, she'd always talk with me. She was just someone I could talk with while working and stuff. If there was a test coming up, she'd make sure I'd know about it. Make sure I was planning on being there to take it.

*Int: Just having someone to talk to while you were studying was important? Not just studying but the interaction?*

P8: Yeah. You don't get so bored when you're working on it.

*Int: Can you think of anyone else that showed support or encouragement or was it pretty much just your parents and your tutor?*

P8: Yeah. That's pretty much it.

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Int: Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)?

P8: Basically college. College and the party. That's about it.

Int: And you mentioned being able to finish on schedule.

P8: Yeah.

Int: Anything you'd like to add to help us help more students? Anything we could do to encourage people to keep going instead of dropping out?

P8: No.

Background Information

Int: Are you female or male?

P9: Female.

Int: Married or single?

P9: Married.

Int: What is your current age?

P9: 60.

Int: How old were you when you joined ABE?

P9: 55 or 56.

Int: What was your age when you completed your goals?

P9: 59.

Int: Did you leave the program before completing your goals and then come back?

P9: Yes, I did.

Int: If yes, how long did you work on it the first time?

P9: About two years.

Int: When did you come back again?

P9: About a year later.

Int: How long did you work on it the second time?

P9: A couple of months. I only had one subject to finish when I stopped going. That's when I got done.

Int: Were you raising a family as you pursued your goals?

P9: Yes, I was.

Int: Were you married or single as you worked on your goals?

P9: Married.

Int: Were you working outside the home while you studied?

P9: Yes.

Int: Were the places you studied rural or urban?

P9: At the Learning Center in Newport.

Int: I guess we could call that a rural town?

—At home or in a learning center?

P9: At a learning center.

Int: How many tutors did you work with? Did you work with everyone that was there?

P9: They switched around. I had most all of them. About 5?

Int: What grade did you complete in school?

P9: I completed my twelve years but then I never got my diploma. Because I was lacking a fraction of a point in U.S. History.

Int: Was that on the U.S. side or the Canadian?

P9: U.S.

Int: You did twelve years but you were lacking just one credit?

P9: Uh-huh.

Int: What grade did your father complete?

P9: My father probably went to 4th or 5th grade up in Canada.

Int: —your mother?

P9: My mother, I don't think she went any more than that either.

Int: Did you have a prior negative school experience?

P9: That was my experience, not getting my diploma!

Int: Did you enjoy going to school?

P9: Yes. I enjoyed it right straight through, but it was pretty discouraging when that happened.

Int: Did you have a prior positive school experience? Anything really outstanding?

P9: No, not really.

Int: Were you diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school or did you feel that

you learned differently than the other kids?

P9: No.

Int: Did you have any medical problems as a child? Eyesight, hearing, sinus . . . ?

P9: No.

Int: Did you require medication as a child?

P9: No.

Int: Did you require medication while you were working on your goals with ABE?

P9: No.

Int: Do you consider yourself more of an individual determined to set your own course or a follower?

P9: I'm determined to do what I want to do. Set my own course. I can follow too.

Int: —Would you rather determine for yourself how to approach a task or be given guidance/assignments to show you how to carry it out?

P9: I usually try to do it myself, and then if I can't do it or if I have a problem, I have someone show me how to do it.

Int: In general, you start out on your own first.

P9: I start out on my own. Like my last test, I went on my own and I went through the book and I took the test and I passed it!

Int: What was the last test that you took?

P9: It was math.

Int: —Did you want your tutor to assign a set amount of work for you to do or determine for yourself what you could handle?

P9: She would set what we had to do but we could go ahead and do more if we had time.

Int: Did you feel comfortable having an amount set?

P9: Oh, yes. I was comfortable enough to . . . You had to reach that goal and then went on if you had time or if you wanted to.

Int: So it was a suggested goal but it was flexible?

P9: Uh-huh.

Int: A task that wouldn't be educational that you've never done before, like putting together a TV stand, would you ask first for someone to show you how to do it or would you try it on your own?

P9: I would try it on my own.

Interview

1) *What were your goals in joining the program?*

P9: I had decided that even though I didn't get my diploma, that I still could get it. I had my mind made up I could do it, and I could do it before I was 60 years old. And I did.

Int: — What helped you reach your goals?

P9: My determination.

Int: Anything else?

P9: No. I had that in my mind that that's what I wanted to do. I was bound and determined that I was going to do it and I went right ahead.

2) *What were the things that were most important in helping you to achieve your goals? You just mentioned your determination.*

P9: My desire to do it. There was nothing else that was pressuring me to do it. I thought, "What the heck do I need it for anyway? I'm 60 years old!"

Int: So you're doing it for yourself. Personal accomplishment.

P9: Yeah.

3) *Did you ever think of quitting?*

—What kept you going?

P9: I quit at one point but that was because there were other things that I had to do in my life. I had two boys that were getting married and it just took too much time to recover from one wedding and jump into the other one and get that over with. Then I thought, I'm going to go ahead and finish. There were the two weddings in between that stalled me from keeping on going.

Int: It wasn't frustration with coursework or anything like that?

P9: No.

4) *What things hindered your efforts to reach your goals?*

P9: No.

Int: Some of the other people mentioned child care, transportation, job, finances. None of those things?

P9: No.



5) *Once you saw you could make progress, did that keep you going?*

P9: Yes, because, when I first started, I understood that I had to go through all the courses that they demanded. And I thought, oh my God! I thought I was going to have to do all the history part and that'd be it. But I took one test and passed, and took another one and passed. I kept right on going. I guess it encourages you to keep on going once you've done one and passed. I figured, well, you haven't lost it all after all, in all those years that passed.

Int: —What helped you to feel that you were making progress?

P9: By passing the test. Working and achieving the accomplishment.

6) *Did any of the things you were studying make you want to continue? Were you inspired by any of the subjects?*

P9: No. I knew I had to do them and I just went ahead and did them as fast as I could

to get it over with.

7) *What part of how the program works helped you the most—flexible time, location, materials, other?*

P9: The location was close. The time fit in because it didn't interfere with anything else that I had through the week. It was mostly at night that we went. I could do my daily routine and then go at night, which made it easy for me.

Int: That was your choice, to go at night?

P9: Yes.

Int: You were able to choose what time.

P9: Uh-huh.

8) *What influence did your self-esteem have on your being able to continue?*

(a) What was your view of yourself when you entered the program?

(b) Did it change while you were in the program?

—If yes, how?

P9: As I said, when I entered the program . . . you feel as if you've lost. After all it's been quite a span between high school and the time you go back. You just wonder if you're going to be able to make it. You know you're older and you know you forget and you know you're not as smart as you were when you're eighteen, but you've learned a lot more in between. But what you learn in between isn't all in books. Your family life and everything. You just wonder if you're going to be able to retain it and go on with it. As I said, once you've done one course and you pass it, it encourages you to go on to the other and you keep on going.

Int: Your confidence increases?

P9: It encourages you to go on. The confidence is there that you haven't lost it all, that you still can learn and put your thoughts down on paper and do the work.

Int: So you start believing that you can.

P9: That's right.

Int: Your view of yourself was different after you accomplished your goal as opposed to when you first started?

P9: Yes, because you go in thinking, "Am I going to be able to do it?" You have that fear of not being able to do it. You don't *feel* that you've lost that much, but you're not quite sure. You don't know how things have changed from then until now. It was quite an experience to go back after that length of time.

Int: When you reached your goal, did you feel differently about yourself?

P9: I was happy that I had done it. I would love to take my diploma and show it to the guy that told me I couldn't graduate!

Int: Is he still alive?

P9: Yes, he lives in Burlington. I can get his address, because I know his sister-in-law.

9) *Did you have any support to reach your goals while you were in the program? —If so, who or what?*

P9: My support was mostly from myself, because I didn't tell my kids that I was doing it.

Int: They had no idea?

P9: They had no idea. It was just myself, my own push that made me do it. I had something that I had to prove to myself. Just because I didn't have that little point that they wanted me to have, I still could get. When I got my diploma, I was kind of disappointed. I would have liked to get a diploma like they would give you in school.

Int: It can be anticlimactic, because you get it mailed and there is no ceremony to go with it. So, your main source of support came from yourself. People sometimes mention family, husbands, spouses, whatever.

P9: It was myself. My husband had a speech problem and he wanted to take the course. To encourage him, that's one reason why I went too. I thought, as long

as he wants to do it (and he won't do it if he's alone), then I'll go too. I thought, heck, I just might as well get it. He didn't go back after the kids got married. I went back and he didn't know.

Int: No one knew until you were finished!

P9: Uh-huh.

Int: Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)?

P9: I don't know. It's the same thing. The feeling that I had that I wanted to accomplish it. I set that goal for myself and I went to it. I was happy—it made me feel good inside that I had gotten it without my teacher's help.

Int: Anything you want to add?

P9: That's about it. It just made me feel good that I had reached it and that I had done what I had started to do.

Int: It's an accomplishment for anyone to do those five tests, especially the math test, with algebra and geometry.

P9: See, I was good in math. I didn't have any problem with math. That's why I kept that for last.

Int: Some people do their favorite test first and they save the harder ones for last.

P9: I figured if I could get rid of the harder ones, I could get done with that one. When I took it, it was at the high school, and I never saw such a bunch of kids and the noise, while everyone is taking tests! I'm glad all my kids are through school, because if they have to go through what I went through when I took my last test, no wonder they don't learn anything.

Background Information

Int: Are you female or male?

P10: Male.

Int: Married or single?

P10: Married.

Int: What is your current age?

P10: 43.

Int: How old were you when you joined ABE?

P10: 42.

Int: What was your age when you completed your goals?

P10: 42.

Int: Did you leave the program before completing your goals and then come back?

P10: No.

Int: How long did it take you to complete your goals?

P10: No more than several months.

Int: Less than a year?

P10: Yes.

Int: Were you raising a family as you pursued your goals?

P10: Yes.

Int: Were you married or single as you worked on your goals?

P10: Married.

Int: Were you working outside the home while you studied?

P10: Yes.

Int: Were the places you studied rural or urban?

P10: Newport, if you could call that urban.

Int: Why don't we call it a rural town?

P10: OK, rural town.

Int: —At home or in a learning center? You said you went to the learning center and had no one come to your home.

P10: Right.

Int: How many tutors did you work with? Or did you work with any tutors?

P10: I don't think so. I just went in to take the pretests. Tanya did most of the pretests.

Int: From that, they said you were set to take the actual tests?

P10: Yeah, I passed the pretests so I just went to take the tests.

Int: Mostly one person pretested you at the learning center.

Int: What grade did you complete in school?

P10: 12th.

Int: You didn't graduate?

P10: I was one credit short. My senior year, I only went half-day. Toward the end of that year, there was a class that I just started skipping. I started going to work. I lost that half-credit. That's why I didn't get my diploma. I could have done it if I had done some research and passed in several papers. They would have given me my diploma. But at eighteen years old, I had little or no interest in doing extra.

Int: What grade did your father complete?

—your mother?

P10: About 5th grade apiece.

Int: Did you have a prior negative school experience?

P10: I really don't see too much negative or positive tipping on either side. I just went to school. The only difficulty I had in grade school was when I started in first grade, I couldn't speak English. That gave me a difficult first year. My first grade teacher was very . . . not mean, but . . . I guess you could say that was a negative experience in first grade. It was a bad start to school

Int: Did you find that that kept you back from the same level as the other students?

P10: Sure. I stayed back a year in third and fourth grade. The language was a definite barrier, sure. I couldn't communicate with my first grade teacher.

Int: Did you have a prior positive school experience?

P10: Nothing I can recall that stands out.

Int: Were you diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school or did you feel that you learned differently than the other kids?

P10: I don't think so.

Int: Did you have any medical problems as a child? Eyesight, hearing, sinus . . . ?

P10: No.

Int: Did you require medication as a child?

P10: No.

Int: Did you require medication while you were working on your goals with ABE?

P10: I don't think so.

Int: Do you consider yourself more of an individual determined to set your own course or a follower?

P10: My own course.

Int: —Would you rather determine for yourself how to approach a task or be given guidance/assignments to show you how to carry it out?

P10: It would depend on how sure I felt about the situation. If I have some experience even close to the task at hand, I would probably undertake it without any help.

Int: With an educational task, such as fractions, would you prefer to have someone show you how to do it before you tried it or would you try it first and then ask for help?

P10: I could go with way. Again, it depends on if I felt I could do it than I would try it. If it felt overwhelming, then I would ask for help.

Int: —Did you want your tutor to assign a set amount of work for you to do or

determine for yourself what you could handle? Maybe we can change that a little bit. Are you a person who would like a teacher to say, "I want you to have these ten pages done by next week"? To have the teacher set the schedule and the limits on the work? Would you prefer to have it more open-ended, just to do as much as you felt comfortable doing, even if it went beyond what the teacher required for that week?

P10: In real life, not being of school age, not setting a certain amount would be better because there are many other things in life as an adult, and school is a secondary thing. At school age, school should be a primary thing.

Int: You'd like it more flexible?

P10: Yeah.

Interview

1) *What were your goals in joining the program?*

P10: To receive my GED.

Int: — What helped you reach your goals?

P10: Self-determination. Motivation to do it.

Int: You had decided that that's what you wanted to do?

P10: Yeah.

2) *What were the things that were most important in helping you to achieve your goals?*

P10: The support had to be there for me to take my pretests. Every step of the way. Otherwise I'd just didn't go take my GED. The support of having pretests that I had to take, and go on to the GED and pass.

Int: By taking the pretests . . .

P10: It helped me achieve my goal by verification that I could do it.

Int: If you hadn't taken your pretests it would have been harder to go and take the GED?

P10: Oh, sure. I wouldn't have had the confidence already behind me to do that.

3) *Did you ever think of quitting?*

P10: Not that I recall. I was very nervous. I wasn't sure that I could do it. I wasn't that confident that it could be done as easily as it was. I thought it was going to be more difficult.

4) *What things hindered your efforts to reach your goals?*

P10: The only thing that might have hindered would have been my lack of confidence to succeed. I was skeptical that I could do it. Fears of it being more difficult than it was.

Int: No problems with transportation or child care or anything like that?

P10: No.

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5) *Once you saw you could make progress, did that keep you going?*

P10: Yes.

*Int: —What helped you to feel that you were making progress?*

P10: By passing the pretests.

6) *Did any of the things you were studying make you want to continue? You said you didn't really do any studying.*

P10: No. I don't remember doing any studying.

*Int: If someone needs any help based on the pretests, then we work with them.*

7) *What part of how the program works helped you the most—flexible time, location, materials, other?*

P10: The thing that helped me was the pretests. Knowing that I could pass the pretests. That led me to believe that I could go on and pass the GED.

*Int: Being able to do a trial test first to see if you knew the material?*

P10: Yes.

8) *What influence did your self-esteem have on your being able to continue?*

*(a) What was your view of yourself when you entered the program?*

*(b) Did it change while you were in the program?*

*—If yes, how?*

P10: Succeeding would raise my self-esteem.

*Int: Once you got your GED, did you feel differently than when you first started? Before you went to take your pretests? Did it change the way you felt about yourself?*

P10: I would say so. Yes. Some.

*Int: Since you were short-term and you got done within a year, you didn't really struggle too hard?*

P10: My confidence may have been weak or low to start with, but it increased as I passed the pretests. I felt confident I could do it.

9) *Did you have any support to reach your goals while you were in the program?*

*—If so, who or what?*

P10: Perhaps some friends. Family.

*Int: —If a person, how did he/she show support for you?*

P10: By supporting me, by saying it was a good thing to do, to achieve.

*Int: You felt that there were people behind you.*

P10: Yes. Support in that way. Showing support, encouragement.

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Int: Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)?

P10: Determination and the will to go on. The progress as I was doing it. If there would have been little or no progress, I wouldn't have wanted . . . It's hard to say.

Int: Because you were succeeding. The fact that you were making progress . . . ?

P10: Progress aided me continuing to the objective.

Int: And your determination to reach your goal?

P10: Yes.

Int: Is there anything else you want to add that you feel would be helpful to us and perhaps other people in motivating them?

P10: Nothing I can think of that would help anybody.

Background Information

Int.: Are you female or male?

P11: Male.

Int.: Married or single?

P11: Married.

Int.: What is your current age?

P11: 47.

Int.: How old were you when you joined ABE?

P11: 46.

Int.: What was your age when you completed your goals?

P11: 46.

Int.: Did you leave the program before completing your goals and then come back?

P11: No.

Int.: Do you remember how long it took you to reach your goal?

P11: Maybe three months, because they don't allow you to take more than two tests.

You had to take five. I'd say three months, maybe.

Int.: Were you raising a family as you pursued your goals?

P11: No.

Int.: Were you married or single as you worked on your goals?

P11: Married.

Int.: Were you working outside the home while you studied?

P11: No.

Int.: Were the places you studied rural or urban?

P11: Newport Learning Center.

Int.: Rural town?

P11: Yeah.

Int.: —At home or in a learning center?

P11: Both. I didn't have a tutor here.

Int.: So you worked at home and then you went to the learning center?

P11: Yeah. I did it here, and they'd correct it.

Int.: How many tutors did you work with?

P11: Two.

Int.: What grade did you complete in school?

P11: 9th.

Int.: What grade did your father complete?

Int.: —your mother?

P11: I have no idea.

Int.: Did you have a prior negative school experience?

P11: So-so.

Int.: Did you have a prior positive school experience?

P11: I really didn't have feelings about it either way.

Int.: Were you diagnosed with learning disabilities while in school or did you feel that you learned differently than the other kids?

P11: No.

Int.: Did you have any medical problems as a child? Eyesight, hearing, sinus . . . ?

P11: No.

Int.: Did you require medication as a child?

P11: No.

Int.: Did you require medication while you were working on your goals with ABE?

P11: No.

Int.: Do you consider yourself more of an individual determined to set your own course or a follower?

P11: An individual.

Int.: —*Would you rather determine for yourself how to approach a task or be given guidance/assignments to show you how to carry it out?*

P11: I'd rather do it on my own.

Int.: —*Did you want your tutor to assign a set amount of work for you to do or determine for yourself what you could handle?*

P11: Determine it for myself.

Int.: *Some people said it depended on the task, whether or not it was educational or whether they had any experience in doing it. If it were a noneducational task like building something, would you first get advice or just try it yourself first.*

P11: Just do it.

Interview

1) *What were your goals in joining the program?*

P11: Just to complete the GED. There's a lot of things in my life I would just quit, not finish. I was just determined to do it.

Int: — *What helped you reach your goals?*

P11: The girls down at the Learning Center were a great help. If it wasn't for them, I'd have never done it. They worked with me and they were real good.

Int: *You felt encouraged?*

P11: Right.

2) *What were the things that were most important in helping you to achieve your goals?*

P11: I just wanted to achieve it, that's all. Nothing's going to stand in my way, I'm just

going to do it.

3) *Did you ever think of quitting?*

P11: Yes, I did. Couple times. Something just wouldn't sink in and then it would snap and come around.

Int: Were you feeling frustrated with the work?

P11: I thought I was an idiot.

Int: —What kept you going?

P11: Tanya . . . going to take a club to me.

Int: When she was a tutor at the learning center.

P11: Yeah.

4) *What things hindered your efforts to reach your goals?*

P11: Nothing stood in my way.



5) *Once you saw you could make progress, did that keep you going?*

P11: Yeah.

Int: —What helped you to feel that you were making progress?

P11: When they'd correct my work. They give a test and they see what you can do. Then they give you work. The next time you go in, you can do it.

6) *Did any of the things you were studying make you want to continue?*

—What were those things?

—Why were they important to you?

P11: Math. That was one I was kind of lousy at. I thought I'd do better than I did in the actual studying part. Even in the test part there were more examples. Instead of saying 2 and 2 is 4, they'd put it into writing. And that's probably where I'd make most of my mistakes.

Int: Like word problems?

P11: Yeah. Then, my reading was good.

Int: Even though you found the math frustrating, you were inspired to continue to learn that?

Int: Yeah. I thought I knew it better than I did.

Int: That didn't frustrate you at all?

P11: That was one time I said I'd quit.

Int: It made you think about quitting but it also inspired (you) to go on?

P11: Right. I was mad about it. I was thinking, "How stupid you are." There isn't anything I can't build. When I came to the math here on paper, there was so much of it I just couldn't remember all these little things.

7) *What part of how the program works helped you the most—flexible time, location, materials, other?*

P11: The flexible time. You could go in and out of there any time you wanted to.

8) *What influence did your self-esteem have on your being able to continue?*

(a) What was your view of yourself when you entered the program?

(b) Did it change while you were in the program?

—If yes, how?

Int: Do you think it had any influence in your continuing?

P11: I guess I felt like an idiot, but that for some reason I could do it.

Int: The educational part?

P11: Yeah. The learning part of it.

Int: Did that change as you were in the program?

P11: Yeah.

Int: How did it change?

P11: I was more secure.

Int: As you progressed in the program?

P11: Yeah.

9) *Did you have any support to reach your goals while you were in the program?*

P11: No.

Int: In the beginning you mentioned the tutors.

P11: Yeah. Tanya there, she was really good about it.

Int: Do you feel like she gave you support?

P11: Oh, yeah. For sure.

Int: In what way did you feel supported?

P11: I guess just the way she did things. When I went in there I felt like I probably couldn't do it anyways. She got me through that way of thinking, changed my whole attitude towards the classes, doing the study work. I thought I was just wasting my time.

Int: That changed and you started believing you could do it.

P11: Yeah. And I think it was her that did that.



Int: Now that we've discussed a few factors, what do you feel had the greatest impact on keeping you going until you accomplished your goal(s)?

P11: It was just me, I wanted to do it.

Int: Your determination to reach your goal.

P11: Yeah.

Int: Anything more?

P11: That adult learning center down there is really great. I can't understand why more people don't take advantage of it.